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OLIVER CROMWELL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MODERN ENGLISH STATESMEN

HISTORICAL GUIDE TO LONDON

CANTERBURY

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE GREAT WAR

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

THE GUILD STATE

ETC.

OLIVER CROMWELL, BY ROBERT WALKER

National Portrait Gallery, London

Frontispiece

OLIVER CROMWELL

BY

G. R. STIRLING TAYLOR

OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE

BARRISTER-AT-LAW

'Utrum sis albus, an ater homo' – CATULLUS

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PREFACE

The thousand and one books, contemporary and modern, which tell the history (true and untrue) of the seventeenth-century Civil War in England, are the greatest monument to Oliver Cromwell; and above all the thirty and more volumes in which Professor S. G. Gardiner and Sir Charles Firth have written, with such massive scholarship and clarity the history of the first two Stuart Kings of England and the Puritan Commonwealth. But since it is the function of a monument to cover the body and not to display it, it is not surprising that this Puritan hero is almost buried beneath the enormous mass of the details of the general history of that heavily documented period. The present volume is an attempt to reconstruct a portrait that will go within the limits of a single canvas. Cromwell is an attractive subject, for he is all-important in social and political science; and as a psychological problem he has an interest which should please those readers who have a taste for romance, though whether it be a matter of tragedy, or comedy, or merely picturesque adventure, will not be easily decided.

Oliver Cromwell was, in a very profound sense, a product of his age; and it has been considered necessary to devote a substantial amount of space to the story of the historical and ancestral soil out of which he grew. Without an understanding of his roots, Cromwell has too often remained but a fantastic creature without the semblance of legitimate birth.

It has not been thought necessary to give detailed references for the facts stated in this book. For they are drawn from the accepted sources which are the basis of all histories of the period; and it would be affected pedantry to repeat them in this place. Probably no trained historian will dispute their accuracy; while the general reader would only be hampered by the reference notes if they were offered. If the portrait of Cromwell as it appears on the following pages does not always coincide with the lives of the text-books of our school days, the critic is respectfully begged to distinguish between facts – which are eternal – and dislike of the deductions from those facts – which even the most modest may hold to be a matter of judgment.

The general reader who desires to examine the sources of the life of Cromwell will trace them most pleasantly and easily in the alluring volumes of Gardiner (with necessary attention to the criticism of Mr. Roland G. Usher) and Firth already mentioned, and in the volumes of the *Cambridge Modern History*. For the original documents in printed form, there is first and foremost, Mrs. S. C. Lomas's scholarly three-volume edition of Carlyle's *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (with an introduction by Sir Charles Firth); which, by her skill, has been made an invaluable work, instead of merely an irritating guide to false conclusions. Carlyle, after all his immense labours, drew a caricature, not a portrait; but he collected the documents, to which Mrs. Lomas has added many others and many most important notes and full references. Sir Charles Firth's *Oliver Cromwell and the rule of the Puritans in England* is the best one-volume life from the constitu-

tional and military side. There is a general sketch of the political history of the period in Gardiner's *Puritan Revolution* (in the *Epochs of Modern History* series); it is a very small book, but it is by a master's hand. *Political thought from Bacon to Halifax*, by Dr. G. P. Gooch, is also a small book, but it is also by a master; and is a brilliant introduction to the general mental atmosphere of Cromwell's age. The reader who wishes to understand how that thought worked out in practice, may turn (for example) to the contemporary *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson* and the *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow* as fundamental documents, which have both had the great advantage of being edited by Sir Charles Firth, and are also charming literature in themselves alone. And he can then spend a dozen lives in reading more official documents; which must always be suspect, because they are official – and therefore generally intended to deceive someone or other.

The author is grateful to Mr. H. A. C. Sturgess, the Keeper of the Middle Temple Library, London, for much courtesy during his use of that famous collection, which so usefully combines the books of constitutional law with those of a wider humanity.

G. R. S. T.

I PUMP COURT,
THE TEMPLE,
LONDON

OLIVER CROMWELL

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF OLIVER CROMWELL

The professional story-tellers, in pursuit of alluring plots that will catch the public ear and open the public purse, have been driven to many fantastic and ingenious devices in the course of their literary careers. They are happy in the possession of an audience that is not disinclined to believe the impossible as long as it is audacious, or to criticise the miraculous if it be convincingly described. But hard pressed though they must often have been for another new theme of romance, it cannot be recalled that the most desperate of novelists has yet dared to invent a tale of an obscure country farmer – somewhere near the border line between yeoman and a more complicated sort of social gentility–who, after many romantic adventures on the battlefield and in the assembly hall, made himself king of England, Scotland and (more doubtfully) of Ireland. The tale sounds too preposterous for even the most ravenous of circulating library subscribers.

Yet, in fact, it would not be a fictitious tale at all; but the most truthful record of the life of Oliver Cromwell, and beyond the reach of the arm of perjury in the most rigid of law courts. He was a man who possessed almost all the elements of the successful hero of romance; except perhaps that he did not give that

attention to women which is commonly expected (and, in truth, generally found) in a man of his commanding position in the world. But then it was impossible to find time for everything in a short earthly career; and, as adequate compensation for a want of *élan* in the matter of love, Cromwell could lead a cavalry charge which no general in Europe would face without anxiety. He had also that peculiar kind of 'nerve' which is always admired by readers of romantic adventure; for he could turn a national assembly into the street with a calm insolence that has made the reputation of some of the most successful characters of melodrama. He had, further, many other remarkable qualities, both virtuous and otherwise, which will appear in the course of the narrative in this book. Cromwell had, indeed, everything to recommend him to the romance writers as their special property. Yet he is not their creation at all, but a piece of most serious history.

The novelists have done wisely in leaving Oliver Cromwell alone. For he does not make that plausible convincing tale which fiction requires for success. He was, on the contrary, a preposterous collection of mental and physical qualities that will scarcely fit together and make a living figure. At one moment Cromwell seems a pure mystic, bound hand and foot by that indecision which is a natural consequence of such an unworldly faith. In the flash of an eye, the mystic is changed into a hard-riding cavalry colonel, who was irresistible on the field of battle. The witness of innumerable documents proves that Oliver was an innocent country man, who had no guile beyond his

simple Puritan faith; whereupon, still more evidence is equally convincing that he was the wiliest and craftiest man of the world.

So the trial of this man's character goes on in endless examination and re-examination. We rub our eyes with incredulous questioning as we endeavour to visualise the figure in the dock of history. At one moment a soldier, the next a saint. Now a statesman, and then something very near a simpleton. At Huntingdon a pious mystic; at Drogheda – and elsewhere – nothing but a murderer, who escaped the hand of justice only because he himself controlled the army and the police force. A democrat who took up arms to save his country from the rule of a tyrant; and then ruled it by major-generals and sergeants, as Charles Stuart would never have dared to do in his haughtiest moments of divine right. There is no end to the illogical and impossible contradictions of Cromwell's life. So the novelists have been well advised in leaving this dilemma to the historians.

But if Cromwell did not have any clear notion himself of what kind of man he was, or what he wanted, the people who have written of him have scarcely gone about in the right way to clarify the mystery. Too many of them have discussed him from the view-point of political and social and religious theories; and have paid more attention to the theories than to the facts. There has been too great a readiness to listen respectfully to what Cromwell said he wished to do, and too little attention has been given to what, in fact, he did do. Great battles of argument have raged round the Royalist theory as against the Puritan theory

of government; until the more important practice of both parties has been forgotten.

Of course there is no manipulation of the evidence in the great works of Gardiner and Firth and the writers of the *Cambridge Modern History*; and if the facts collected in such standard authorities are carefully examined it will be found that they do not justify the pictorial Oliver Cromwell that has, somehow or other, got into the general public mind, and into most of the smaller text-books.

There is need for a more realistic method of research and argument. It is useless to spend too much time discussing whether Cromwell believed in liberty, when the chief fact of his life was that he ruled by an army. It is only wasting precious moments investigating whether he was speaking the truth when he said he was the servant of Parliament, for a few minutes' reading will reveal the convincing fact that he acquiesced in turning into the street every parliament of his time, or did it on his own initiative. The wanderings of the theological mind are very mysterious; but there is little excuse for spending so many generations of historical research in discovering whether the New Model Army was the ideal of Cromwell's earnest Puritan soul, when we know that one of his favourite soldiers was Colonel 'Dick Ingoldsby, who can neither pray nor preach, and yet I will trust him before ye all,' as the second Protector, Richard Cromwell, said in his extremity. The chief fact that is known of this Cromwellian ideal swordsman is that he always supported the winning side; and finished his career by being made a baronet by Charles II., who had a keen

eye for a sensible man of the world without sectarian fads.

It will be the endeavour of this biography always to give attention to the facts before listening to the theories – which are so often raised as a useful screen before an inconvenient truth. It is primarily important to know what Oliver Cromwell did, before we start in a more difficult research into what he intended to do. There are many convincing facts in Cromwell's life which make most of the theories of both himself and his admirers an idle waste of time. It is tiresome and irritating to spend much energy on mastering the Puritans' high ideals, and then to discover, at the end, that most of the deeds they did – as distinguished from what they talked about – were in almost complete opposition to their declared intentions. It is annoying beyond measure to listen to Cromwell's noble theory of a free people; and then to discover that his only permanent contribution to the English constitution was a standing army, and that his ideal of a free religion was to massacre every Papist priest he could catch in Drogheda.

The illustrations in this book have been chosen as a particular help in this realistic manner of historical research. Oliver Cromwell's portrait by Walker and George Monk's by Lely are the corporeal summing-up of the whole Puritan Civil War. There is the mystic Cromwell, with a face full of ideals and dreams that had perilous foundations or none at all, who lost his way in the world and brought his country to chaos. On the other page is Monk, the level-headed, rather dull soldier, who had no ideals but plain honesty,

stolid loyalty to his master, and sound common sense. It would be scarcely an exaggeration to say that it is not possible to understand what a clumsy failure Cromwell was until one has considered how quietly and successfully Monk was working, almost by his side, at the same time. We have heard far less of Monk's victories and efficient administration in Scotland simply because they were both accomplished with so certain a hand that they succeeded before failure made them remarkable.

The portraits of Charles I. and his son Charles II. are equally convincing evidence. The father is the embodiment of weakness and deceit – the qualities which lost him his throne; while the cynical, firm-lipped son was an obvious necessity for an England that had suffered for twenty years from the stupid squabbling of sentimentalists who all alike refused to recognise the great world of facts.

Then there are the two pictures of Hinchinbrook House and Ely Cathedral; the former was the Cromwell family's chief spoils of the Roman Church; while the farming of the Cathedral tithes of Ely was a main source of Oliver Cromwell's income when the Civil War began. These two pictures are realist expressions of the fact that in the Puritan Rebellion religion and economics were bound together in a very suspicious manner.

Finally, the plates of the Grammar School at Huntingdon and Hartford Church and Ferry are emblems of that old-established England which Cromwell unsuccessfully endeavoured to overturn from its traditional ways. The Grammar School, after eight

hundred or so years, still stands as it was built in the twelfth century as a chapel. Hartford Church is still in the style of the Norman period, when it was raised in its present form; it had once belonged to the Priory of the Austin Friars at Huntingdon, but had passed – with other Reformation spoils – into the hands of the family of Elizabeth Bourchier, Oliver's wife, and was included in her marriage settlement.

When it comes to be a conflict between a man's theoretical opinions and his practical acts, it is suggested that wise observers will attach the greater importance to the acts. When this method of historical criticism is applied to the period of the Puritan Rebellion of the seventeenth century, it results in a record which has many points of disagreement with the somewhat sentimental judgment of those who have too hastily taken men at their own estimate. The historian must be patient and sympathetic with the ideals of the people he meets in his travels; but this human sympathy must never be so generous as to overlook the facts.

There is one problem before all others in considering the place of the Puritan Rebellion in our national history. It is not of very vital interest to know what kind of a legal constitution Cromwell and the Puritans would have made if they had won; but it is of the gravest importance to realise what character of mind and soul England would have possessed if the Puritans had accomplished their 'reforms.' Cromwell, perchance, might have succeeded in giving England a government of saints, the 'godly men' for whom he was always crying. If we can judge them by their

opinions and their acts, it seems likely that they would have crushed out all freedom of thought, all intellectual progress, all real civilisation; and this island would have been cut off from the inheritance of its European ancestry. Rome, as a secular teacher and master, still more as an ecclesiastical ruler, had many evils which always needed careful watching; but its splendours were greater than its dark spots. Rome, republican, imperial and papal, may have become a city of stupendous corruption of mind and morals, but it was a magnificent and stimulating spectacle – even if mainly a warning – for the world; it had produced beauty of art and keenness of intellect as payment and penance for its evil deeds. A Puritan England would have been a place of tin-chapels of the mind and all those drab and tedious things which are the inevitable destiny of such a sullen philosophy of life. Cromwell's constitutional fancies were of little lasting importance; but his whole creed was an attack on the sanities and beauties of civilisation. A world governed by the Stuarts had its inconveniences; but to be ruled by Cromwell or Harrison would have been a dreary death in a dungeon.

CHAPTER II

THE STAGE OF OLIVER CROMWELL

From the view-point of scientific history, Oliver Cromwell was but a speck on the surface – perhaps, it may be admitted, above the surface – of the English history of the seventeenth century; and even that was only a fragment of a far wider western Europe, which had already overflown to the other side of the Atlantic. All the turmoil of Cromwell in England was only one part of the greater movement which also planted the Puritan settlers in New England.

The historian has perhaps too hastily described the history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in terms of theological theory and practice. But this is merely a lazy way of avoiding the search for some more fundamental causes than a difference of opinion concerning the precise place for the altar in the church and the mystical quality of the sacraments upon it. There was much more than theological bickering beneath the great struggles of these two centuries of European history. The ecclesiastics and preachers chanced to have so many pulpits at their disposal; they were, by the very nature of their calling, great traders in words, and still the main writers of controversial literature. For all which reasons they made a noise on the earth beyond the due proportion of their influence. For example, we shall find Oliver Cromwell, who won

his way in the world mainly by his qualities as a hard-riding cavalry colonel, ascribing his success almost entirely to the peculiar virtues of his theology. Since John Pym and the Lord Protector and their chief assistants, civil and military, persisted in describing their actions in terms of Puritan texts, the historians have, somewhat weakly, given way to them; and have labelled the seventeenth-century civil war as the Puritan Rebellion. Whereas it was an event which needs a far wider term of classification.

This volume is to be the biography of a man and not the story of a nation. Yet it is as impossible to describe the man Oliver without referring to the history of his time, as it would be to give an adequate account of the life of a chicken without mentioning the egg from which it came. Cromwell was, with all his strength and self-will, merely the product, even the slave, of his age; the sport of his circumstances; the cork tossing helplessly on the waves of the history of his nation. It is useless to try to understand him without considering the main outlines of this history that had given him birth, and continued to hold him fast as the grip of destiny. He, himself, fatalist and mystic and man of moods, would have been the first to admit his impotence. Let us therefore consider the greater history behind him.

In the year 1599 when Oliver Cromwell was born, western Europe in general (and England in particular) was reaching the climax of one of those changes in human affairs which are called revolutions. As a matter of strict fact, nature scarcely recognises such an unmannerly proceeding as a revolution; but so many

of the historical writers have been confused by the apparent violence of events that the term has become conveniently used to denote the more sensational periods of historical development. There is certainly a plausible excuse for thinking that the sixteenth century had been a time of revolution, as a glance at the history of England will show.

Until towards the end of the fifteenth century the mediæval triple society of king, lords and peasants, with their small freer towns and guilds, had grown without any violent break since the days of the Anglo-Saxon kings; that is, for over five hundred years, at a modest estimate. There had, of course, been minor interruptions. For example, a Norse pirate, rapidly acquiring (with the genius of his race) the rudiments of civilisation, had invaded England from Normandy with as many professional freebooters as he could persuade to join him. The Church of Rome, on somewhat inadequate grounds, gave these robbers its sacred blessing; and the expedition was a permanent success. But it did not make any radical change in English affairs; it only hastened development on lines already laid down. Then there had been vast calamities, like the Black Death in 1348 and the following year, which must have seemed like a world earthquake to the contemporaries who viewed the ruins. But once more the changes were more spectacular than fundamental.

In the fifteenth century, however, a more drastic change began. The feudal nobles, who had been a very vital factor in mediæval life, began to show signs that they were in decay as a social unit. Society was gradually becoming more cultured and more orderly,

and the knight and lord were no longer necessary to protect their tenants against a foe that never came. Like the army that restored peace under the early Cæsars of Rome, so also the feudal English army grew corrupt and fell into unruly ways. In Rome the soldiers set up Emperors. In England, also, they took sides in king making. The Wars of the Roses which went on intermittently from the landing of Henry Bolingbroke in 1399 until the death of Richard III. at the battle of Bosworth in 1485, were a series of unruly brawls between the gentlemen of England to decide who should be their king; and – a still more important question – to decide which of the nobles should own most land and retainers. This struggle collapsed; for the nobles (with a thoughtful consideration for the national welfare that they had not always shown during their prime) killed each other off with such energy that by the time the Wars were over they had torn themselves to fragments and left the king supreme.

By this overthrow of the power of the noble class in England the social constitution lost its balance. The first effect was to throw the weight on to the side of the Crown; and the Tudor dynasty during the sixteenth century governed England (by means of its new bureaucrats) more firmly than the nation had ever been ruled by any king before. The Tudors were a royal race of good brains, and with the charming manners which are conveniently described by the term 'tact'; and their subjects were only too delighted to get anyone who would keep the feudal barons from raising their broken heads and disturbing the peace of the realm once more.

But the rise of the royal Tudor power to a height far above the more modest privileges of a mediæval king was too sharp a reaction; and by the time the great Queen Elizabeth had died, in 1603, the English constitution was beginning to heel over on the other side, instead of remaining in the fairly stable equilibrium of the Middle Ages. The new autocratic monarchy would have worked admirably if the wise Tudor dynasty had lasted; for, with all their faults, the Tudors were born rulers and knew their job, as few statesmen have known it in history. But the Stuart kings, full though they were of good intentions, were as incompetent a set of ignoramuses as ever sat on a throne – except the gay and clever Charles II., who, however, lacked the good intent. So when Charles I. added barefaced lying to stupidity, the ship of state gave that almost fatal tilt into civil war which was Oliver Cromwell's opportunity to step on to the stage of history.

But it is important not to over-emphasise the stupidity of the Stuart monarchy; for the Tudor period had produced a much more serious social evil than the absolute, despotic king. Far more dangerous than the almighty sovereign were the agents, whom he had created to do his will. Here we begin to reach the root cause of the strife of the Stuart period. While the feudal nobles, by the Wars of the Roses, were carelessly committing suicide for the good of their neighbours, a new class was rising into power. Gradually the trade of England was growing, and when Henry VII. had finished the Wars by the battle of Bosworth, he found the solid elements of a new middle class which

was only too delighted to support a monarch who knew how to keep the peace, which was good for their trade. On this growing middle class the Tudor monarchy was based; and the merchants prospered amazingly all through the sixteenth century.

Thomas Cromwell was its most typical example, and for a brief moment its greatest success. He may have had some remote connection by blood with the Lord Cromwells of Lincolnshire, who had flourished in the earlier days of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; but Thomas himself was of the outskirts of London, and of so many trades and occupations, and of so uncertain a reputation, that it is scarcely unfair to call him an adventurer. We will examine him later in relation to Oliver's family tree; for the moment the point to make is that Thomas Cromwell became the chief agent by which Henry VIII. seized the lands of the Church of Rome and distributed them among the large crowd of the new men who were hanging round the Court in the hope of picking up some of the crumbs which fell from the royal table.

The Tudor kings bought the services and servility of the new middle-class traders and the smaller gentry by throwing to them the rich spoils of the Church. It is not surprising that these new men became somewhat ardent believers in the dogmas of the (so-called) Reformed or Protestant religion; for if the Roman Catholics came into power again, the change back again to the Roman dogmas might, indeed probably would, end in a very inconvenient change in title deeds also. Here we find the clue which explains why the men who led the Parliamentary party during the

Cromwellian wars were such devout Puritans, who hated Rome with an almost savage contempt. For, as they growled and cursed, so many of them were on guard over the Papist bones of the destroyed abbeys and nunneries which had been given to them at the Reformation. Their religion in many cases may have been sincere – but there were also more worldly reasons for their zeal.

Now there is usually a good reason, as well as a bad, for such a widespread and powerful group as the Puritans undoubtedly were in the England of the Elizabethan and early Stuart days. Some of them may have hated Rome because they did not want to give up the spoils of the displaced Church. But there was a good explanation why the most honourable of Englishmen should have set their teeth with the determination that never again should the Papists have power in the island of Great Britain. When Oliver Cromwell was born there were men and women still living who could remember the days when the Duke of Alva (the brutal tool of the degenerate Philip II. of Spain, the Catholic leader of Europe) had ruled the Netherlands from 1567 to 1572 by the methods of a homicidal lunatic. In 1573 a Spanish Catholic army had swept the city of Antwerp with that 'Spanish Fury' which made the far-away tales of the Huns a living and worse reality. In 1572 the Protestants of France had been massacred on St. Bartholomew's day; and the Pope of Rome had ordered a *Te Deum* of rejoicing to be raised to heaven; while to Paris he sent this message of encouragement: 'It was a great consolation to himself, he said, and an extraordinary grace vouchsafed to Christendom. But

he desired, for the glory of God and the good of France, that the Huguenots should be extirpated utterly.' This amazing pronouncement from the vicar of God is given in the words of Lord Acton, the great Catholic historian (*History of Freedom*, p. 137), lest it might seem unbelievable.

So it was not an idle theological prejudice, but a sound human instinct which made many Englishmen who did not possess an acre of stolen Roman lands determine that never would they give the Papists a chance to accomplish in England the crimes they had committed in France, the Netherlands, and Spain. Englishmen very wisely determined that they had no use for a religion which was likely to be thrust into their hearts with the too persuasive point of a Spanish sword. A Church which confused dogma with insolent tyranny, and conversion with murder, was not suited for the somewhat stubborn qualities of the English mind, which had no appetite for a hierarchy that had once warmed its zeal in the fires of Smithfield; and, if the tales from the Netherlands and France were true, would proceed to wholesale murder rather than be baulked of its prey.

The exact position of theology in this age is a matter of the greatest historical importance in the life of Oliver Cromwell; though, paradoxically enough, it was not because people were peculiarly religious at this time that we read so much about dogmas and creeds in the records. In spite of the popular notion of sixteenth and seventeenth-century spiritual fervour, it was an age when men were probably rather more material than usual. There was more chattering about

theology in Scotland than in most places, and yet when Cromwell's soldiers invaded that country at the time of the battle of Dunbar they were disillusioned in a drastic manner. One of them wrote a letter home which is more instructive on this point than most of the constitutional documents. He records his impressions of the Scots amongst whom he was encamped: 'It is usual with them to talk religiously and with a great show of piety and devotion for a time, and the very next moment to lie, curse and swear without any manner or limits. . . . For the sins of adultery and fornication are as common amongst them as if there were no commandment against either. They call those only broken women that have had but six bastards.'

That is a simple historical record that does away with much of the sentimental rubbish that has been written of this Reformation period and its Puritan fervour. When we read later of Scottish armies marching with religious fanaticism to impose the Solemn League and Covenant on a theologically unwashed England, we shall be able to judge it all at its true value if we remember the letter of Cromwell's soldier which has just been quoted. On closer inspection, this outburst of religious enthusiasm all over Western Europe at this time turns out to be by no means so deep and wide as the historians' generalisations have led their readers to believe.

Religion, in short, was being used – as Cromwell was, unconsciously, going to use it – as a convenient war-cry, under whose banner very unspiritual deeds might be more easily performed. In France, ambitious nobles were endeavouring to climb to power in the guise of

champions of the Huguenots, and the Guises were fighting for their own hand as the saviours of the Roman Church. Germany was torn to pieces in the Thirty Years' War under some shallow pretence that the faiths of the people were at stake; whereas, in fact, it was a war mainly carried on by brigands for the sake of the spoil. The historians who can detect in the Thirty Years' War any theological sincerity or respect for the Christian gospel of peace and goodwill on earth, would be successful in searching for the proverbial needle in a bundle of hay. Mansfeld and Wallenstein, as champions of the Cross, whether of Rome or Geneva, have made themselves a farce on the page of history. Of course, there were sincere leaders like Coligny and Gustavus Adolphus; men such as Luther and Calvin may have been credulous enough to believe that the doctrines they so truculently taught were of great importance to the soul of man; and there were hundreds of thousands of sincere and simple men and women on both the Roman and the Protestant side to whom their faith was a living reality.

But these sincere simple folk were not the people who raised armies and committed atrocities because their neighbours would not agree with them. We shall find overwhelming evidence that the Civil War led by Cromwell in England was very much akin to the Religious Wars of Germany and France; for all alike they were only in a small degree matters of theology and fervent religious faith; being rather political manipulations, craftily managed by worldly men who found a religious dogma just as convenient a banner of war as the Crusaders had found the Cross when they desired

to make conquests in the East. This is not to say that Oliver Cromwell was insincere – which would be untrue, though it does amount to the suggestion that during most of his career he was the dupe of craftier men. But that is a question which can only be discussed in detail later.

For the moment it is merely necessary to emphasise that the war, of which we shall find Cromwell the greatest leader, cannot be considered detached from all those other wars which were devastating Europe during this period. To judge Cromwell's war justly, it is imperative to stand back and look at the whole picture in its full proportions. Again, the more strictly constitutional problem of the struggle, whether king or parliament should rule, was also not unlike the contemporary problem being fought out in France, whether Crown or Nobles should control the State. To understand Oliver Cromwell it is necessary to set him in his proper place in the vast panorama of English history, which in turn must take its due place in the greater history of Europe. It is just because this man is so completely a part of the living texture of his time, so representative a figure, that he cannot be separated from his environment.

These then were the main lines of the English social structure when Oliver Cromwell was born in 1599, and during the years of his immaturity until he entered public life twenty-five years or so later, in the beginning of the reign of Charles I. It was during these twenty-five first years of the seventeenth century that those political and social and religious problems came to a crisis which it was Cromwell's life work to solve – and

finally to leave unsolved or in even worse condition than when he took it in hand.

It was an England which, before all other features, had become exceedingly prosperous. The merchants were the most active factors in the increase of trade, with its resulting wealth; though the multiplied desires of the Renaissance nobles had undoubtedly given a market to the men of commerce. Here again we find that this outburst of wealth in England was only one side of that Renaissance ferment which had spread over the western European continent. In England it was displayed in material form in the beautiful Elizabethan country houses which can be seen to this day in the English parks. The traveller will be right if he regard each of them as a remaining symbol of that prosperity of the sixteenth century which, as we shall see, was somewhat unexpectedly going to cause the civil war in which Cromwell became supreme. These new Elizabethan mansions were the homes of the prosperous new gentry and the still newer merchants who had made their fortunes by trade in London city, and had bought themselves country estates out of their profits, or received ecclesiastical lands in return for their services to the monarchs who had destroyed the Roman Church.

It was these merchants and prosperous sheep-grazing gentry who, by the turn of the wheel of fate, were left face to face with the triumphant Crown which had won the Wars of the Roses. The great feudal lords had been shorn of their retainers and of most of their power. Gone was the mediæval Church, with its great abbots and vast estates which had been like fortified outposts

of Rome in a half-conquered country. Gone also were the local traders' guilds which had given a backbone of independence to the cities and the smaller country towns. In these guilds the smaller traders had themselves legislated for their trade. Under the despotic kings this power of regulating trade was gradually transferred to the central government controlled by the monarch's new ministers of state.

Nobles, Church, and guilds, all alike had been for various reasons shorn of these powers which had in past ages made them great factors in the national government. The king and his bureaucrats were almost absolute. At first the new middle classes, with their Church lands and their trade prosperity, were merely the tools and agents of the king to whom so many of them (like Thomas Cromwell) owed their rise. If the kings had continued to govern with the delicate tact and the efficient knowledge of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, it is possible that a delighted and prosperous nation might have decided, as neighbouring France did, to allow the kings to keep the business of governing in their own hands; without worrying their people to come to Parliament to take a hand in that difficult and wearisome task. In 1614, two years before Cromwell went as a student to Cambridge University, the States-General had met in France for the last time until the Revolution of 1789. Oliver did not know that it was to be largely his work in life to discuss (on the field of battle) whether the king should call any more parliaments in England. Indeed, the first parliament in which Cromwell sat, in 1628, looked like being the last; for Charles did not call another until 1640, and in the

meantime governed after the manner of his fellow-monarchs of France.

But there were two facts at least which made this solution impossible in England. First, the clever Tudors were replaced by the dull-witted Stuarts; and secondly, the merchants and country gentry of the new middle class continued to grow in wealth (and therefore in power) with such exuberance that they were not prepared to allow a despotic Crown, however well it did its business of governing, to retain supreme authority in its own hands. The Puritan Civil War was fought to compel the kings of England to allow the middle classes of the House of Commons to govern England; and Oliver Cromwell was to attempt to rule, in substance if not in name, as the first king of the merchants and country squires.

CHAPTER III

CROMWELL'S ANCESTORS

It is the exception for a nation to be ruled by a sovereign of its own blood. The dominant race is usually an invading people; often a small minority that, by some freak of fortune, is able to impose its will on the large majority of the earlier inhabitants. Thus, in England a few thousand Normans (politely called invaders by the historians, but more strictly a gang of well-armed pirates) ruled the state until they were replaced by a French dynasty of Plantagenets; then came a Tudor race of Welshmen; when the Stuarts (who were Bretons who had migrated to Scotland) were driven out, it was by a Dutchman; and when he departed the Hanoverians gave the Anglo-Saxons their nearest approach to a native dynasty.

So it is not surprising that Charles Stuart, a Scotsman, should fight Oliver Cromwell, a Welshman, for the right to rule England. We shall find that Englishmen, so long accustomed to the continually changing racial pattern of their masters, were somewhat indifferent to this civil struggle and tried hard to escape from the duty of fighting for either side. It was even necessary for Charles to import two foreign professional mercenary soldiers, the Princes Rupert and Maurice, to keep his side going at all; while the parliamentarians would probably have lost the war if they had not

discovered this Welsh settler, Oliver Cromwell of Huntingdon, who came to their rescue. As we shall see he rescued them so successfully that he decided to crush the parliament as well as the monarchy and made himself in fact a despotic ruler.

It may be said that it is a straining of language to call Oliver Cromwell a Welshman. But, on the contrary, it would be a far greater straining of the facts to call him a typical English country squire; which he has become in the conventional historical text-books. His great-great-grandfather was a Morgan Williams, whose father had just arrived from Wales; and if anyone suggests that the Celtic blood must have been diluted in those four generations, one can only point to a fact much more convincing than pedigree, namely, to the mind of the great Puritan leader. Nothing could be less like the typical English country squire than this dreamy, mystical, introspective, fanatic Oliver. That craving for prayer meetings and sermons and the saving of men's souls – surely nothing could more proclaim the superstitious nonconformist Welshman as he has existed to this present day; whatever Cromwell was, he was not a typical Englishman – for they are not a race of emotional fanatics, but notoriously the contrary.

Morgan Williams was the son of a John Williams who had arrived at Mortlake, near London, about the end of the fifteenth century. He had probably been attracted by the fact that the new Tudor dynasty was Welsh also; and his worldly wisdom was not far wrong, for we soon find Morgan, his son, planted in court circles, in 1515, as yeoman of the guard of Welshmen,

with unmilitary duties, of a legal nature, as his main royal service. But the cleverest stroke he made was when he married Katherine Cromwell, the sister of Thomas Cromwell, who was to become Earl of Essex, and the chief agent of the destruction of the Roman Church in England.

Since this Thomas Cromwell was the chief founder of the future fortunes of Oliver, it is necessary to consider him with attention. There are faint lines of pedigree connecting him with some baronial Cromwells of mediæval days – just as the heralds were later to discover at the convenient time that Oliver was a descendant of lords of Powis, of a somewhat mythical kind. But Thomas Cromwell was of very modest account in his own early life, when he was probably brought up by John Williams (the father of the Morgan already introduced) who was steward of the manor of Wimbledon, and general land agent and lawyer. Thomas Cromwell got into trouble of some unknown kind, and went abroad somewhere about 1504, wandering in Flanders and Italy. In Flanders he learned a great deal about the wool trade with which his family relations at home were already connected as fullers on the River Wandle, near London, besides being smiths, armourers, and brewers. In Rome, Cromwell picked up still more valuable information about the Catholic Church by transacting for a friend the business of a grant of indulgence from Pope Julius II. in 1510. A close inspection of the Papal court of that period (Alexander Borgia had only died in 1503), was not likely to increase Cromwell's respect for it as a spiritual institution; though it must have whetted his appetite to

spoil it for its enormous wealth. It is even possible that on the way home to London he may have read, or even seen played in Paris, that most rollicking of farces, *Julius II. Exclusus*; wherein Erasmus (so it was said, though the style is more like Mr. Bernard Shaw's) displayed the Pope with the door of Heaven shut in his face by St. Peter. This most brilliant of satires would alone have produced a reformation in a world that had any sense of biting wit. Anyhow, Cromwell returned to England about 1514; and in the course of a few years became Henry VIII.'s chief Church breaker.

It was because of this spoiling of the Roman Church that he must always be such an important part of the life of the Oliver Cromwell with whom we are now concerned. We have seen that Thomas's sister had married Morgan Williams; and their son, Richard Williams, was pushed along to fortune by his uncle Thomas. Richard became a favourite of Henry VIII., and so good a soldier and tilter in the tourney ring that he was knighted and presented with valuable shares in the lands of the Church, which his uncle, Thomas Cromwell, was spoiling. Little wonder that Sir Richard Williams showed such energy in crushing a revolt of the Catholics in Lincolnshire; or that a month later the rebels of Yorkshire, the Pilgrimage of Grace, should demand that the king dismiss that evil councillor Thomas Cromwell.

Among Richard William's rewards were the nunnery of Hinchinbrook in Huntingdon and the abbey and lands of Ramsey, ten miles or so away in the same county; which estates made the first great rise of the

HINCHINBROOK HOUSE, NEAR HUNTINGDON

Photograph, Whitney, Huntingdon

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Williams family to fame and fortune; and they remain the key to the story of Oliver Cromwell, their great-grandson. Since Thomas Cromwell was, for the moment, the greatest man of the realm, there was an obvious advantage in his nephew demonstrating his kinship by taking his name as well as his gifts. So the new-made knight became Sir Richard Cromwell, and his very Welsh descendant, Oliver, has been carelessly considered a typical English squire, instead of an alien who ran counter to every tradition of English life.

Hinchinbrook is the most illuminating thing in the biography of Oliver Cromwell; and a picture of that beautiful Elizabethan house has been added to this volume because it is only second in importance to the portrait of Oliver himself. On this spot a Benedictine nunnery had stood since the time of William the Conqueror, almost five hundred years before; and when Henry VIII. threw out the nuns and put in a soldier servant of his own, it meant that the Middle Ages were over. The house itself, much as it now stands, was built about 1560 by Sir Henry Cromwell, the son of the above Sir Richard; and here he received, in magnificent state, his Queen Elizabeth in 1564. So prosperous had his family grown on the spoils of the Church and the rewards of the monarch's service, that this Sir Henry was called the Golden Knight. His son, the first Oliver, succeeded to his glory and knighthood; and in this mansion James I. was four times the guest of its owner.

With such a history, it is not difficult to imagine some of the family conversation in the Cromwell household.

As owners of Hinchinbrook and Ramsey, besides other Church lands, it was only natural that a firm conviction should be engraved in their minds that it would be a disaster for England if the Roman Church ever recovered its old power in their island. It is so easy to confuse one's own inconveniences with the troubles of the nation. When they remembered the Roman Catholic atrocities in the Netherlands and France they may have had good reason for their prejudices; but it would be inaccurate history not to point out that had it not been for Hinchinbrook and Ramsey, and the innumerable other like houses scattered all over England, it might have been much easier to forget the sorrows of Protestant victims on the other side of the English channel.

The Golden Knight had a second son, Robert, who inherited only that modest part of the family estates which lay in and around the little country town of Huntingdon, within a mile of the great family house of Hinchinbrook. It was a portion worth £300 a year, though that to-day would be the equivalent of £1000 or so. Robert was thus a small country gentleman, who represented his neighbours in parliament and as bailiff of his local town. He had married a very suitable woman, Elizabeth, the daughter of William Steward, of a family that had also carefully feathered its nest out of the spoils of the Church of Rome. An earlier Steward had been the last prior of Ely; and had become converted to Protestantism at the happy moment which made him the first dean of the reformed Church, while his relations had become farmers of the tithes, and had other profitable relations with the new

religion. So one understands that the firm attachment of the Cromwell family to the new Protestant Church would be confirmed by the family opinions of the Stewards.

To this quiet couple, full of spiritual and financial Protestant zeal, was born on April 25, 1599, at Huntingdon, a fifth son, Oliver, who is the subject of this book. But before beginning to follow his personal career it will be useful to note the end of the brief but vivid glory of the Cromwells at Hinchinbrook. The young Oliver's uncle, Sir Oliver, whom we have seen welcoming with such reckless profusion the Stuart James I. (whose son was later to be beheaded by the same family as its most hated foe), could not manage his fortune or keep his expenses within his income. Hinchinbrook had to be sold; and its owner retired to his more modest home on the Ramsey Abbey estate, where he died at the age of ninety-three, in the year 1655, when his more famous nephew had made himself the Lord Protector of England. But the uncle would have nothing to do with such freakish republican notions and died a firm Royalist.

It is interesting, finally, to see who was the new owner of Hinchinbrook. It was sold to Sidney Montague, the uncle of that Earl of Manchester, who was to become Oliver's military chief during the first part of the Civil War. The urgent desire of saving England from any chance of a Catholic reaction was transferred to a new family; and it will help the reader in estimating their actions if we remember that the Montagues were the supplanters of the Cromwells in Huntingdon. There will come one most important moment in

Cromwell's life when he gave Lord Manchester a candid bit of his mind; and the cynic will say that this sale and purchase may have added bitterness to his tongue.

CHAPTER IV

CROMWELL'S EARLY LIFE

At each historical period there is usually one group of society which, by its energy and skill or craftiness, makes itself dominant over all others. At the end of the sixteenth century this dominant group was the large and growing class of merchants, government servants and fortune seekers that had grown out of the thriving peace and prosperity of the Tudor period. Of this class the Cromwells were such typical specimens that they might well have been placed in the national museums, in glass cases, with labels describing their generic characters.

When Oliver was born in Huntingdon, on April 25th, 1599, his grandfather, the Golden Knight, Sir Henry Cromwell, was still flinging away his wealth with reckless hands at Hinchinbrook, a mile or so away. The home where Oliver was born, like so many other spots in Cromwellian history, had once been in the possession of the Church of Rome, having been a house of the Austin Friars. It lies off the High Street of Huntingdon, and in its present form it is only a hundred years or so old; but a few of the timbers of Oliver's actual birthplace are still left in the newer house. St. John's Baptist Church, where Oliver was baptised, has now gone except the graveyard; but the register of the boy's christening is preserved to this

day in All Saints' Church, which is still standing much as it was in Cromwell's time. Huntingdon is a very ancient town, and in its mediæval prime it had fifteen or more churches. But beside All Saints', the only other to survive is the parish church of St. Mary, which we can see also in the main as the young Oliver knew it. He probably was often there, for the tower collapsed in 1607; and the rebuilding was proceeding as he was growing up.

His education was at the school which had been founded in 1187 by David, Earl of Huntingdon (to become later the king of Scotland), who is a figure in Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman*. The Hospital of St. John the Baptist, as the institution was first named, was for the care of the poor, the entertainment of travellers, and the instruction of the young of the town. The school room in which Oliver was taught still stands in the form in which it was built at its first foundation in the twelfth century. It is necessary to recall these facts; for it is part of the problem of this man to try to understand why one who had grown up in the very heart of the old traditional things of this ancient England – for Huntingdon was on the Ermine Street, that most famous of English roads which had been a main highway since before the Romans came – should have become possessed by an almost savage desire to tear up a social growth that had its roots in the underworld of history.

Oliver thus lived from his youth on the highway of national life. His grandfather, the Golden Knight, died in 1603, and his uncle, Sir Oliver Cromwell, had only just come to take his place as the head of the

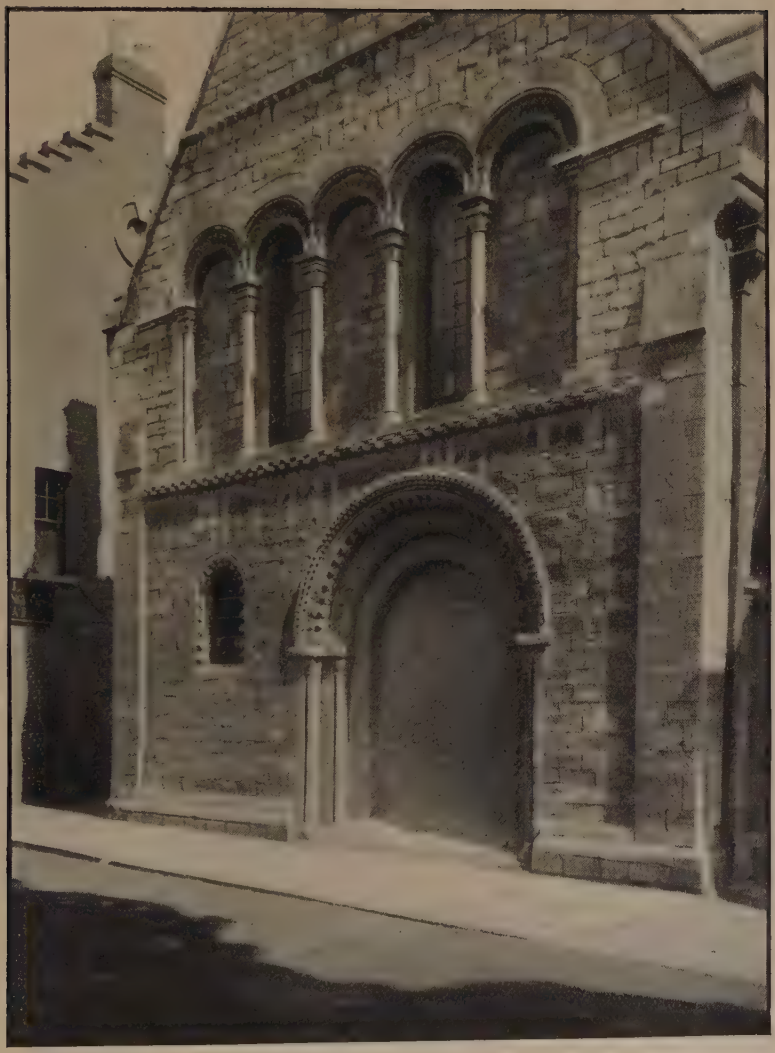
family when James I. passed along the Ermine Street as another landmark of history on this road which had seen a continual procession of great travellers since the the history of England began. King James was on his way to London to take the crown which had become his when Elizabeth died; and Sir Oliver Cromwell entertained his new sovereign in royal state such as the monarch of poverty-stricken Scotland had rarely seen before. It is most likely that at Hinchinbrook the king saw his host's little nephew, four years old, who was one day to cut off the head of their guest's son; but having no prophet in his train, James, all unconscious of the family fate, went on his way to London, full of thanks to his lavish host for his good fare and his gifts. 'Marry, mon, thou has treated me better than anyone since I left Edinbro',' were his very true parting words; for he left with many presents, a cup of gold, horses, hawks, hounds, and money to distribute among his retinue.

Many tales have grown round Oliver's youth. Since he had not yet made history, the recorders have done their best to make something which will take its place. It must not be hastily assumed that nothing is true unless it is recorded in the deeds of lawyers and officers of state. Indeed, an official report is one of the most suspicious documents in historical research. The tale that young Oliver once wrestled with the child Charles Stuart, and threw him, is by no means unlikely: for, as we have seen, James and his Court paid four visits to Hinchinbrook. There is a more fantastic story that one day as Oliver lay resting after his sports, the figure of a tall woman appeared by his bed and prophesied

that he would be the most powerful man in the kingdom; and Noble confirms this by the additional information that Cromwell used to tell the tale when the prophesy had became an accomplished fact. There was another occasion in his youth when he played at making himself a king; but if every child in later life accomplished that very usual childish wish, monarchs would be very plentiful.

Be these matters as they may, Dr. Beard, the Puritan headmaster of the Huntingdon school which has already been mentioned, was a much more substantial event in Oliver's life than visions by his bedside. Probably he was responsible for giving that twist to Oliver's mind, which made him the man that disturbed history. Beard was apparently one of those men with erratic brains who never can see the world in its true proportions, or distinguish between a fact and a fancy; and he worried both himself and his pupils and readers about matters of trivial importance. Thus he took some trouble to convince his fellow citizens that the Pope of Rome was anti-Christ; which after a few generations of Renaissance Popes was either self-evident or immaterial. Continuing his revelations he went on, in his *Theatre of God's Judgments*, to show that the Almighty always punished the wicked on earth as well as later on in another place. As this statement was so clearly against the record of a world history, which demonstrated, to the verge of irritation, that evil men have very often flourished exceedingly, the book is strong evidence that the Puritan mind cannot always argue to a logical conclusion.

The modern science of education has come to the



THE OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, HUNTINGDON

Photograph, Will F. Taylor

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conviction that the human being rarely recovers from its early lessons, and Dr. Beard is important in the life of Oliver Cromwell in as much as his first master's faulty mental methods can be detected throughout his pupil's career. Of course, he was not the only factor in that life, but he confirmed the other powerful influences around Oliver which were carrying him in the same direction, and, finally, turned him out into the world a man of bias and prejudice who, with all his greatness and sincerity, could never quite see the facts as they really existed. The centuries-old traditions – superstitions, if one ventures on a stronger term – of the mediæval world by the end of the sixteenth century had been scrapped in economics and theology and politics; and the weaker minds had lost their grip on reality and had turned from the highways of thought into the byways of a narrow Puritanism in religion and politics, which was more futile than the dogmas it has supplanted.

The growth of witch-hunting, one terrible example of this 'new thought,' was a most illuminating result of the environment in which Cromwell was moulded in the habit of unbalanced emotions. It is true that the Church of Rome was still earlier responsible for this cruel insanity, but it was in the seventeenth century, under the reformers, that the superstition became a gigantic scandal. Scotland, the spiritual home of national Protestantism, was the scene of some of the worst horrors of witch-hunting; but the English record is more to our immediate purpose. Since there is not space in this volume to treat the matter in detail, it is permissible to quote such a standard authority as

Chambers's Encyclopædia, which states: 'Under the Commonwealth there was a great increase of persecution, and especially in the Puritan eastern counties. The infamous "Witch-finder General," Matthew Hopkins, pricked, waked and swam hundreds of unhappy women . . . caused to be hanged sixty in one year (1644) in Essex,' and so on. It was the year in which Cromwell was to crush Charles at Marston Moor; and the two facts are related in a far deeper sense than mere chronology, as will be more obvious as Cromwell's life is inspected. Cromwell was to slaughter priests in Ireland for much the same illiterate reasons that caused Hopkins to murder Essex witches.

But there is an illuminating example of witch-hunting in Cromwell's own family and in his native town, which happened only a few years before he was born and must necessarily have been a matter of discussion in his own home. In 1593, the wife of Sir Henry Cromwell, Oliver's golden grandfather, had died, and the doctors not feeling dogmatic enough to denote a sufficient cause, John Samwell and his wife, Alice, and Ann, their daughter, were charged at the Huntingdon assizes with causing the death by witchcraft; and, in the words of Noble: 'they were, therefore, all three publicly murdered, suffering amidst the acclamations of a barbarous and rude populace . . . their goods were forfeited to Sir Henry as lord of the manor; but he unwilling to possess himself of the supposed felon's goods, gave them to the corporation conditionally, that they procured from Queen's College in Cambridge a doctor or bachelor of divinity to preach every day of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, a

sermon against the sin of witchcraft in one of the churches of Huntingdon.'

Such was the atmosphere of the Cromwell house; and the reader who has any respect for the scientific value of environment will agree that it cannot be left unrecorded in Oliver's biography. Such events in his home, which he heard discussed at an impressionable age, must have had their effect. Cromwell had now been instructed, on the unimpeachable authority of a judge of the High Court of Justice, that it was a proved fact that evil men and women could, at the unlawful order of the Devil, bewitch their victims to death; and this alarming knowledge of the spiritual world must have singularly confirmed the young Oliver in his growing conviction that he, on his side, could be an agent of the lawful commands of the Almighty. If one man could obey Satan, it was his part to counteract him by obeying the voice of God. We shall find that Cromwell spent a large part of his life with the firm impression that what he did was the ordered will of God. It was a form of spiritualism or witchcraft which the judges had no authority from their king to punish; so it was left to Charles I. to settle, on the field of battle, the truth or error of Cromwell's convictions.

There is nothing very certain to be learnt of Oliver's early days. Dr. Beard, his schoolmaster, was (as we have seen) not a man of generous culture; but he appears – with the assistance of the birch – to have got the rather trivial scholarship of the day into his pupil's head; at least he sufficiently equipped him to become a fellow-commoner of Sidney Sussex College at Cambridge University in 1616. It was the college that had been

founded by that aunt of Sir Philip Sidney who had married the Earl of Sussex; hence its name. It holds to-day one of the best-known contemporary portraits of Cromwell, drawn in crayons by Samuel Cooper (1609-72); and when it was presented to the college, many years later, the donor quoted the verse by Andrew Marvell which sums up the life of Cromwell in three somewhat doggerel lines, though, being by a great poet, they are more likely to reach the truth than anything written by the constitutional historians:

'I freely declare it, I am for old Noll,
Though his government did a tyrant resemble,
He made England great and her enemies tremble.'

But the college official roll book is less kind to its great pupil, for someone has added after his name a verdict which in its Latin form reads like the judgment of the Middle Ages on the man who had dealt so savagely with their deepest traditions, though, when we translate it into English, it sounds perhaps a little too like the spitefulness of a college don who had lost his living during the Commonwealth rule: 'He was an old humbug, an abandoned murderer who having foully slain the most pious king Charles the First, then seized himself the throne, and for nearly five years governed the three kingdoms with ruthless tyranny.' Which contains a great deal of the truth; but is far too simple and crude a verdict to cover all the mysteries of this great man who still continues to baffle the psychologist and the historian. Perhaps he also baffled himself.

Cambridge University did not succeed in implanting

any deep roots of intellectual culture in Oliver Cromwell: which is not surprising, for he was not a man of that breed. There is nothing all through his life, except a certain taste for music, which denotes that he had any of the graces of the subtle mind. Indeed, all that we can learn of him goes to show that he had a coarse grain running through him. There are many tales of his horseplay and noisy fun; and the general impression one gathers is that he was a clumsy kind of youth who was more at home in a rough field game than in his study – which is only what one might have expected when it is remembered that Cromwell first made his reputation in life by driving Royalist cavaliers in rout off the field of battle.

Of course, he had to learn a fair amount of Latin; which in his day was still a necessary language for anyone who had any intention of entering public life. The Reformation had killed the Church of Rome in England, but it had not quite succeeded in crushing its language, which had existed for ages before the Church had begun its career. In his later life, Cromwell, who knew practically nothing of any other language (and was thereby proclaimed a man of little breeding for those times) could pull enough Latin out of his memory to understand foreign ambassadors, and some historians have concluded, rather hastily, that he could speak Latin fairly well. But Burnet was fairly conclusive on this matter when he wrote that Oliver 'had no foreign language, but the little Latin that stuck to him from his education, which he spoke very viciously and scantily.'

The point is a part of the cumulative evidence that

Oliver Cromwell was a slow worker with his brain, however rapid a handler of cavalry. He was never, throughout his life, at home in the world of intellect when the occasion demanded careful thinking. His mental qualities were very largely of the emotional sort, where what is called inspiration comes in a flash and takes action by an impulse. When the time came for Cromwell to advise his son, his ideal of learning was very modest: 'Read a little history, study the mathematics and cosmography. These are good with subordination to the things of God.' Again he writes to his son Richard: 'Take heed of an inactive vain spirit. Recreate yourself with Sir Walter Raughleye's History'; which was not a very severe task of scholarship to impose on this young man, and, as the bent of the same letter shows, Oliver was more concerned in inducing his son to seek the Lord than to find learning. It is typical of his emotional, uneducated mind.

Cromwell's father died in 1617, and Oliver ended his college career after only a year of university life. He was the only grown-up son, and he went home to Huntingdon to manage the estate he had inherited. Then being now a landed gentleman, however modest a one, it was the proper thing to go up to London to read law at one of the Inns of Court. He appears to have done this at Lincoln's Inn, though there is no official notice of him in the records of that Society.

It is of this time that the tales of his supposed riotous living are recorded. These are, of course, mainly told by his political enemies. Sir Peter Warwick wrote: 'The first years of his manhood were spent in a dissolute course of life, in good fellowship and

gaming, which afterwards he seemed very sensible of and sorrowful for . . . and he used a good method upon his conversion, for he declared he was ready to make restitution to any man who would accuse him, or whom he could accuse himself of having wronged (to his honour I speak this, for I think the public acknowledgments men make of the public evils they have done to be the most glorious trophies they can assign to them); when he was thus civilised he joined himself to men of his own temper, who pretended unto transports and revelations.'

Heath and Dugdale have added to the rumours, but when such admirers as Carlyle hear these tales they fly into ungovernable prose, write of Heath as 'carrion,' and the later Noble becomes 'a man of extreme imbecility' for daring to print such lies. But although it would be certainly unfair to take this opposition scandal at its face value, there is other less biased evidence. There is a letter, dated October 13th, 1638, bearing the signature 'Oliver Cromwell,' and addressed to 'my beloved cousin Mrs St. John,' in which the writer, having had many years to consider his earlier career, wrote thus: 'You know what my manner of life hath been. Oh I lived in and loved darkness, and hated the light; I was a chief, the chief of sinners'; and much more which will appear in a later chapter in full.

Now, the writer of this letter was not a libellous royalist, and presumably knew something of what he was writing – so far as men in the highly-strung condition of the Salvation Army convert platform can be said to be intellectually conscious of anything. Carlyle, faced by this letter, was in difficulties, and, with a

humour that probably escaped himself, commented: 'O modern reader, dark as this letter may seem, I will advise thee to make an attempt towards understanding it'; and proceeds to make darkness still darker by a flood of adjectival rhetoric which would have stampeded any revivalist meeting into the arms of the obscurest of faiths. 'Reverend Mark Noble, my reverend imbecile friend, discovers in this letter evidence that Oliver was once a very dissolute man that Carrion Heath spake truth in that *Flagellum* balderdash of his.'

It may, of course, be true that Cromwell was not writing the truth in this letter, or one may be wise in putting it down, as already suggested, as mere hysterical emotion. But it is a dangerous admission for a writer who was trying to paint the portrait of a superman. The more balanced student will accept this little scrap of autobiography as an interesting piece of evidence which fits logically into the whole picture of this man. He was clearly a creature of morbid nerves and violent impulses (we shall find ample evidence of both), and in his 'unsaved' youth it would have been most unnatural if he had not committed the somewhat trivial faults of the normal man. Had it not been for the later abnormal development of his 'religious' convictions, history would not have been sufficiently interested in these unimportant details to linger over them. But when his life developed as it did, they become interesting as illuminating evidence of that extreme Puritan temperament which was to cause such chaos and national suffering during the generation in which it reached its climax.

It was during this period when he was visiting

London – chiefly for the study of law, which then in great part took the place of a university career in the life of the normal English gentleman – that Oliver was married, on August 22nd, 1620, at St. Giles's Church, Cripplegate, to Elizabeth Bourchier, the daughter of a city knight and furrier, who had, after the manner of the successful merchant of his day, made himself into one of the new city-county gentry by buying a rural estate at Felsted in Essex. No match could have been more in keeping with the Cromwell tradition; his ancestors had married the daughters of those wealthy city merchants whose successors were to be among the chief factors in the coming civil war which Oliver was to fight so successfully in their interests.

Perhaps the most important fact about Cromwell's wife is that she may without much loss disappear from his biography as soon as she enters it. She was not one of those women who make an impression on the page of history; she gave her husband nine children, of whom three sons and four daughters grew up and by deeds or matrimonial alliances became, more or less, considerable factors in their father's later career of fame. The wife herself is always a dull figure in the background.

After the marriage, Cromwell returned with his wife to Huntingdon and settled down with his much adored mother on his little estate; with his splendid uncle still living, until 1627, at the great family mansion just outside the town. Such a mangificent kinsman would naturally give him a position in the county; until within seven years, as already mentioned, the Montague's bought up the Cromwell family's chief

mansion and took their place as the chief magnates of the shire. From 1627 onwards, Oliver Cromwell may be regarded as a man without much direct influence of a social or financial kind, except such as came from his own character and exertion. The reflected glory from the Reformation spoils was past its prime; and Oliver had kept but a fragment of the estates which the newly enriched family had so suddenly gained and lost. He was the only surviving son of his father; but there were six sisters still living, and the bulk of the inheritance went to providing for them and their mother. So there was not much superfluous wealth for Oliver; who, however, appears to have acquired a considerable sum from his wife.

The matter of Oliver's financial affairs is not a little interesting. There was, for example, one somewhat mysterious incident which occurred soon after his father's death. Oliver suddenly made an attempt to get control of the estate of his mother's brother, Sir Thomas Steward. Sir William Dugdale put the worst light on it in his history (published 1681); where he wrote that Cromwell was in want of money and asked Steward for help, but 'finding that by a smooth way of application to him he could not prevail, he endeavoured by colour of law to lay hold of his estate, representing him as a person not able to govern it.' In other words, he attempted to get his uncle certified as a lunatic. He did not succeed, and the strangest part of the story is that when Sir Thomas soon died, in 1636, he left his estate to the nephew who had tried to snatch it before his time; which the cynic might consider some slight evidence that Oliver had been right in his opinion.

The whole matter is strange, but must not be disregarded as a hint of Oliver's impulsive and unreasonable temperament.

Later on, when he was again in financial difficulties, Oliver found an easier victim in his gentle wife, who gave up her fortune to pay his debts. It is little wonder that Cromwell decided to take up the more remunerative work of governing all England, since he was so clearly unsuitable for managing efficiently the few acres of it which happened to be his own property.

For the eight years or so after his marriage Cromwell was living the quiet life of a small country gentleman; not over prosperous as we have seen, showing no signs of particular capacity, and protected from the more material troubles of the world by a shrewd mother (who apparently continued to carry on the Huntingdon brewery by which her late husband had enlarged his income), and by a wife who was of the unassuming housewifery kind.

The peculiar condition of Oliver's health during these early years of married life is a key to much of his later career. It is a very important fact that the man who was in later years to be the terror of Royalist cavaliers, and the dread of all continental governments, was in the earlier period of his life an exceedingly neurotic person, who sometimes had moods which bordered on instability of mind. The local Huntingdon doctor, Simcott, had a remarkable story to tell Sir Philip Warwick, who has recorded it in his *Memoirs*. Dr. Simcott's account was: 'that for many years his patient was a most splenetick man, and had phanszes

about the Cross in that town; and that he had been called up to him at midnight, and such unseasonable hours, very many times, upon a strong phansy which made him believe that he was then dying.'

This is confirmed by a record that has survived in the notebook of Sir Thomas Mayerne, a London physician, which runs: '15th September 1628, for Mons. Cromwell, *valde melancholicus*,' that is, 'in an extreme state of melancholia.' This was the year when Oliver Cromwell had gone to London as the member for Huntingdon, in the Parliament of 1628, an event which was his entry into the greater public affairs of the day, and began a new phase of his life. It is all important to note that he made this entry in a most unstable and abnormal condition of mind; which, presumably, must have had some considerable effect on his judgment of national business. It is one of the great mysteries of this man's character that he, who was to show such calm judgment and reckless courage on so many fields of battle, had in earlier times so often disturbed the peace of his country doctor by calling him up at midnight to soothe a fear of death that had no reasonable foundation in fact.

This nervous disease of early life would appear to have been (either during the later days at Huntingdon or about 1631, when Cromwell removed to St. Ives) merged in that more permanent condition of religious fanaticism which was henceforth to be one of the dominating factors in Cromwell's career. The two conditions were closely related, the one curing the other, but both alike abnormal and unhealthy.

It is probably the key to Cromwell's ultimate failure to govern England. For a world of normal men cannot be successfully ruled by a master who does not know the facts of everyday life.

CHAPTER V

CROMWELL ENTERS PUBLIC LIFE

When Charles I. summoned his third parliament to meet on March 17th, 1628, Oliver Cromwell was chosen by his fellow citizens – or rather by such few of them as possessed votes – to represent his native town of Huntingdon. As a member of parliament Cromwell became a part of the public history of England. We have seen reason to believe that for almost the last century the Cromwells had been type specimens of the dominant new middle class of the nation, and to that extent had been all that time in the main river of political history. But they were now, with the great Oliver, to rise to the surface of the stream, and become obvious to the most careless observers on the bank; until at last, instead of merely flowing in that stream, he became such an obstruction to its course that he turned it from its natural bed, causing it to overflow its accustomed banks, and, by the Civil War, flooded England with turbulent waters until his death, when once more the river of history became normal in its flow.

Before it is possible to understand Cromwell's position when he became the most gigantic single figure in the national history of his time, it is necessary that the reader should get a general idea of the main factors of the political situation when he first entered parliament.

Since the arrival of James I. from Scotland, in 1603, to become the King of England, events had been developing with ever-increasing rapidity towards the climax of the Civil War; which was fought to decide whether the divine right of kings or the parliamentary right of the House of Commons was to be the basis of the British constitution.

It would be very convenient if that great problem in the philosophy and practice of history could be summed up briefly into a simple generalisation which puts royal tyranny on one side of the picture and democratic liberty on the other. It would be so easy to follow the political and military strategy of the Civil War between the Stuarts and the Parliament if we could feel certain that the royalists were always arguing and fighting for despotism on one side, while the Parliament men were always defending that very admirable thing called liberty on the other. But the facts cannot be reduced to any such simple and certain elements.

Pym and Hampden and Cromwell and their friends, overheated by the fierceness of the battle, may have hastily assumed (after the manner of all over-excited combatants) that every time they hit a cavalier on the head, by argument or sword, it was always a blow for freedom. It is so much easier to shout a sharp, terse war-cry amid the din of battle than to enter into a carefully weighed argument in detail. Philosophy of any depth has never yet made itself heard amid the clashing of arms; but the collecting of evidence concerning this Puritan War has, however, been proceeding for three centuries, and we can now take a more detached and impartial view of the struggle. The late Prof.

S. G. Gardiner and his successor, Sir Charles Firth, have told us more about the events of the Civil War and its causes than was ever known by the men who were in the midst of it. Thanks to these historians' skill in research and fairness in stating the evidence, the facts are now so obvious that the jury of normal men are entitled to hope that they can return a true verdict.

When James I. took up the task of governing England, he suffered under a serious disability He knew very little about his new kingdom. He was in the position of a man who had learned to grow corn in northern Europe, and had then suddenly gone south and started to grow cotton in Egypt. James was not a man who would have made a great success of any profession in life, having a mind that was too limited to get beyond the most domestic of boundaries. The witty Frenchman who said he was 'the wisest fool in Christendom' probably got near the truth. James was not altogether to blame. He had been brought up in the midst of a gang of half-savage, entirely selfish Scottish nobles on one side of him, with a mob of religious fanatics shrieking their impossible theology into his other ear. Justice and logic are no effective answer to robbery and hysterics; and James had not been taught to rule by the laws of the syllogism. It is to his credit that to his death he remained essentially a just man, and his main objective the public good. In following those estimable ends, he made many most serious blunders, but it was more often from sheer ignorance than evil will.

James had filled his head with a preposterous notion that there was in all kingship a tenure by divine right

for he had been brought up in a land where there was very little general culture, and men spent their time arguing on matters of theological superstition. So James believed in divine right because he thought that such an important affair as the monarchy must necessarily be put into a theological formula. Besides, it was probably the only unassailable position for a country like Scotland, where earthly law was a matter of rather small account, and generally decided by the man who possessed the sharpest sword. It was also an effective answer to a Papist who talked of the divine power of the Pope and his Church. Besides, when the only alternative government in Scotland was either one by grasping nobles or fanatical ministers, James had every excuse for believing that a king had more divine right than anybody else.

In Scotland a civil parliament scarcely existed in any form worth considering. Its place was taken by the sectarian assembly of the Kirk. So when James came to England he had almost no knowledge of a parliament as a rational and practical instrument of government; and only primitive notions of such a thing as an organised court of law. After his experience in Scotland he was not unjustified in believing that every time he wanted anything done for the good of his kingdom he would have to do it himself. Therefore, when on his way to London, he ordered a thief, caught in the act, to be hanged, he was surprised to learn that such acts of justice had to be referred to the professional judges. This primitive state of mind was the fundamental stumbling block of both James and his son, Charles I. They never realised that England had

reached the stage when government was in the hands of a professional class of legislators and administrators. They wanted to do everything themselves. Which was not much more than the Tudors had wanted, and in fact done; only the Tudors were a clever family, and the Stuarts (except Charles II.) never did anything well, except by sheer chance—a chance which rarely happened in their unlucky careers. They were nearly the most incompetent bunglers in history.

Yet James I. and Charles I., paradoxically enough, were very often right and their opponents were often wrong. For example, James hated war, and tried his hardest to keep the peace; whereas the parliamentary opponents of both himself and Charles were longing to go to war with Spain, because they thought it would be good for trade. They did not know, as we know to-day, that it is almost as disastrous to win a war as to lose it. Again, the parliamentarians were always trying to get more Calvinism into their Church because they thought it would be good for liberty; whereas, James, who had tasted that brand of freedom in Scotland, had no such delusions.

Once more, the early Stuart kings were very short of money; they were quite right when they told the Commons that the kingdom could not be properly conducted without larger grants by way of taxation. In the older days of the mediæval period, the king, in times of normal peace, could pay the expenses of ruling out of the rents of the royal estates and the services due from his feudal tenants. But those simpler days were no more. Government had become a much more complex business since the Tudors had invented bureau-

cracy to control a great many national affairs which would have been beyond the scope of a mediæval ruler. Trade was responsible for the greater part of this increasing expense of government. So, when Charles asked the House of Commons to be more liberal in its grants of taxation, he was really asking it to pay for services which were mainly performed on behalf of the merchants who were becoming such a great power in that assembly. The king was, on the whole, reasonable when he asked for money; and the parliamentarians were, on the whole, wrong when they refused it.

Yet we must be fair and recognise that James and Charles had themselves to blame for a great deal of the trouble in which they involved themselves and their nation. If James and Charles had possessed the tact and good manners which are necessary for any successful innkeeper or fashionable doctor, then there would have been no civil war in England in the seventeenth century. There was nothing radically wrong in the Tudor or Stuart system of rule; indeed, there was very much that was admirable; its rougher dictatorial edges would have worn off, as they had almost disappeared by Elizabeth's time; and it would have fitted itself in with the older parliamentary system which had become an organic part of the English constitution, which it was useless to try to uproot. Both the new bureaucracy and the old elected assembly were necessary balances in a stable nation.

For dull stupidity, narrow outlook and exasperating personal manners the Puritan leaders would have aroused the opposition of the most lowly members of the animal kingdom; and the dull-witted Stuarts could

not handle such a crowd. For instance, when the Commons once complained that Charles was threatening them; and the king replied with a sneer that he intended no such menace, because 'I would scorn to threaten anyone but my equals'; then Charles was using language which no gentleman would have allowed to escape his lips.. It is one of the chief qualities of the aristocrat that he can control his pride and keep his insolence to himself; it is one of the terms on which he has been allowed to possess his privileges for so many centuries.

It was bad manners and stupid want of tact that made the two first Stuart kings ride into the political whirlpool of a civil war. On the other hand, two grains of common sense on the part of the parliamentarians might have made even Stuart stupidity innocuous; but the parliamentarian leaders were lacking in more than manners. James and Charles, with all their faults, had a great regard for the good of their kingdom. Except when they were blinded by a ridiculous fascination for a favourite, such as a Carr or a Villiers, they did not often do anything which was palpably against the public interest; and when Charles allowed such as Buckingham to rule, he was probably genuinely convinced that he was a good man for the work – and, in fact, he was not nearly so much of a knave or fool as the conventional historical text-books have declared.

An impartial consideration of all the evidence leads the student to the conviction that there was more selfishness, more lack of patriotic regard for the whole national welfare on the parliamentary side than on the part of the king. Of course there were hundreds of sincere patriots amongst the Puritans; men like

Francis Thornhagh, who were ready to lay down their lives in the firm conviction that the king must be resisted as a tyrant. But beneath the rhetoric of the reformers there is so much evidence of political corruption of all kinds that it is impossible to believe any longer in the pleasing myth of our school days: that Pym and Cromwell were the leaders of noble patriots, struggling for liberty and justice against the tyranny of Charles and Strafford.

When Charles called his third parliament in 1628, with Oliver Cromwell as one of its members, the main factors of the struggle between the royalist party and the parliamentary party were fairly clear. Charles, with all his egotistical ideas of divine right, and all his Scottish ignorance of parliamentary government, was still convinced that he could rule England better than the parliamentary leaders could. Although he was a man of very moderate intellect he was probably right in this opinion, but whether he was right or wrong in thinking he could govern well, he certainly could not accomplish that work without money. Now Parliament was just as stubborn as the king that this money it would not grant to Charles unless he did what parliament wanted: for example, dismiss the Duke of Buckingham as his chief adviser. Although not yet precisely stated, parliament was claiming that as it paid the piper so it should call the tune. Here it came into a violent collision with Charles, who, as recently as 1626, had addressed his House of Commons in these words: 'Remember that Parliaments are altogether in my power for their calling, sitting and dissolution; therefore as I find the fruits of them good or evil, they are to

continue or not to be.' It was a typical instance of both his bad manners and his dull narrowness of mind. In law he was quite correct; but only a fool has ever imagined that the letter of the law is sufficient guide for a statesman.

It had come to a point when both sides had made up their minds they were right and neither would give way. On the face of it there seemed good enough reasons for the annoyance and stubbornness of the parliamentarians. In 1625 there had been the terrible failure of the expedition against Cadiz. The fleet and army had sailed after every possible blunder in equipment, owing to official corruption and bad judgment; the catastrophe had been complete; and the leaders, Cecil and Essex, had brought home only a wreck of their forces. Then, in 1627, Buckingham had come back from his expedition to the Isle of St. Rhé, by La Rochelle, to save that Protestant city from the attack of its Catholic king. He had set out from England with a fleet of a hundred ships, carrying six thousand soldiers. Like most things Buckingham tried to do, the expedition was a ghastly failure. It was not all his fault, but ill-luck of weather as well. But, when he came home again with scarcely half his army, it was no use blaming the fates and winds of heaven; and Charles suffered for his favourite's errors and misfortunes. There had been a bad naval disaster of a similar kind at Lisbon, in 1589, in Elizabeth's day; but, being a woman of tact instead of a blunderer like Charles, that sovereign lady had not driven her nation into a state of nerves. Of course, if the Commons had entered more heartily into the venture, and supplied money more

liberally, the result at La Rhé might have been different. As it was, it was another last straw which was turning the national balance to the side of civil war.

Since the House of Commons would not vote the money necessary to carry on the business of the nation Charles was compelled to find it by other means. He searched through all the corners and cupboards of the English constitution, and raised loans and levied tonnage and poundage and impositions without the consent of parliament. When the judges kicked at the forced loans, Charles dismissed the lord chief justice, imprisoned the gentlemen who would not pay and sent the poorer men into the army; and even when the most utter disregard of the constitution could not find any other taxes, he seized men by the press-gang to man his vessels, and sent the fleet into the Channel to raid French commerce for prizes.

It is obvious that the English constitution as a working machine had broken down, and the laws of the land were being replaced by the personal wishes of the king. But it must be remembered that the constitution law had never yet made it entirely clear that the will of Parliament was to be supreme over the Crown when a compromise could not be reached. There were precedents to be quoted on both sides, but in spite of all these, it was still admitted by most men that the king was the chief administrator of his kingdom. Tudor England had certainly accepted this general assumption. The problem had come to an issue because the Crown was now, thanks to Tudor autocracy, strong enough to venture to take a firm stand; and the crash came because

the throne was now occupied by a man who was at once incurably stubborn and entirely wanting in tact and straight-dealing.

On the other side, what was the position of the Parliament? The rise of the new middle-class, the smaller country gentry who had risen in place of the great feudal lords, and the merchants who had grown fat on the products of Tudor trade, had given the House of Commons a potential strength such as it had never before possessed. It was a class of which the young member for Huntingdon was, as we have seen, a type specimen. The new Commons were as yet very inexperienced in the business of governing a nation; for they had never yet tried their youthful hand at this difficult work, having left almost everything, except the supply of money, to the Crown and its advisers and officials. In Elizabeth's day England had been ruled by the queen and William Cecil and Walsingham, and a few minor men.

The point had now been reached when the Commons had decided that not only would they supply the money, but they would also judge how it should be spent. It would be more accurate to say that they had not yet formulated their demands into a general principle, having gone no farther than to assert their intentions of compelling the king to choose intelligent and efficient officers of state. If Charles had selected another William Cecil instead of a Buckingham, the crash might never have come in English history. But since Charles's rule was producing national disasters of an obvious kind, the issue was now inevitable, since the king had one of those minds that have more general principles than

common sense. It was therefore a fight between royal power or parliamentary control.

This essentially mundane problem was strangely confused by an apparently very different issue of a so-called religious nature; and the confusion arose for very accidental reasons. The official ecclesiastical system of England had been the product of the royal will of Henry VIII., who had expelled the Church which was ruled by the Pope of Rome, and replaced it by a Church of which Henry was the supreme head on earth. It was therefore natural that the bishops and clergy of this English Church should have come to the conclusion that their dominion was peculiarly bound up with the strength of their earthly creator. They had seen the force of James I.'s famous dictum: 'no bishops, no king'; and naturally concluded that the reverse of that statement was equally good logic. Hence there had grown up a doctrine that the king, their creator, was a king by divine right, and that his power was absolute.

We have here the reason why the civil struggle, which was to determine whether the king or parliament should be the supreme factor in English government, should take this unexpected religious form. The men who were the chief theoretical supporters of the absolute Crown were the high churchmen who wrote books and preached sermons to convince their readers and congregations that the king could override the wishes of his parliament if he chose to disagree with it. Therefore, almost inevitably, the parliamentary party became an opposition Puritan party; and the greatest civil war in English history has been named the Puritan Rebellion. The parliamentary leaders preached Puritanism as a

political contradiction, just because the king and his chief supporters preached High Anglicanism.

Now it would be unfair, and therefore unscientific history, to assert that the basis of the Puritan school of religious thought, which had been growing since the days of Elizabeth, was not, in a large way, a genuine and sincere expression of personal conviction. To glance at the type specimen of Cromwell is to be convinced at once that his Puritanism was a penetration of the whole soul, just as Laud's religion absorbed his entire life. But the interesting point, as far as the lay historian is concerned, is that both men mixed their religion and their politics so intimately that their secular and spiritual nature became a united whole.

In later days a cynical statesman of the Early Victorian Age was to say that 'things are coming to a pretty pass when religion is dragged into private life.' Lord Melbourne would have professed still graver uneasiness if he had been faced by the disturbing menace of Oliver Cromwell and Laud; who went much farther in their indiscreet doctrinal enthusiasms – for they also took their religious faith into public affairs. He would have had just cause for his uneasiness; for it is evident to the most casual reader of the records of statesmanship that this intrusion of religious faith into political practice had been always a cause of serious trouble throughout the history of the world. At the period now being discussed in this book, for fifty years and more, Western Europe had been filled with armed gangs massacring and assassinating each other in a fierce determination – so they professed – to spread the gospel of the Prince of Peace throughout their lands; and for the last ten

years mercenary soldiers of the Thirty Years' War, under the banners of their varied self-denying Christian sects, had been making Central Europe into a desert and a charnel-house.

But it would be entirely misleading to believe that the holy banners that were waved so ostentatiously in the theories of the rival combatants of the Puritan Revolution were of serious account in the minds of nine-tenths of the English people. The High Churchmen and the Puritans, the Presbyterians and the Independents, and the still stranger sects that flourished in that time of intellectual chaos, all marshalled together would have made only an insignificant group among the whole people of England, who, like almost all other races (except the Scots) have never been exceedingly interested in the niceties of theological arguments. If the Civil War had been left to the men and women who were seriously concerned by the distinctions between Erastianism and Independency, or by the fine differences in the paths by which Lord Strafford and Mr. Pym sought their respective salvations; then, instead of a national war, it would have been only a series of wrangles at street corners, and in the churches and chapels of the sects.

It is of the first importance to distinguish between the few conscious leaders of historical movements and the many unthinking people who follow them to victory or defeat. If anyone imagines that John Pym or John Harrison on the parliamentary side, or Archbishop Laud or Prince Rupert for the Royalists, were true representatives of the minds and intentions of their followers, it will be a grave error in judgment. If Oliver

Cromwell be examined in order to discover the mind of the average Englishman of his period, then England will be grossly misjudged. We shall find that the plain, common-sense, normal citizen of this age would have willingly got rid of the wild fanaticism. The Civil War was fought because a few leaders on both sides were dull-witted or self-interested, and sometimes both; and England was rushed into a disastrous quarrel which a half-dozen sensible, quiet folk could have settled without a blow.

But the sensible and the sane would have been reckoning without Charles Stuart and Oliver Cromwell; both men of such warped judgments and limited intellects, of such overheated emotions and preposterous theories, that neither of them could see sense until it was driven home by force of arms. Now it so happened that Oliver Cromwell could lead a cavalry charge better than any other man in England. For this very unintellectual and purely unspiritual reason the Civil War ended as it did; and when the quiet Richard Cromwell succeeded his father, and made it preposterously clear to every one that he was far too gentlemanly a fellow to ride his horse over those who did not agree with him, then the whole Cromwellian system collapsed like a pack of cards, and England returned to a Stuart monarchy.

But England had to be tormented for a decade before the voice of the normal man could make itself heard above the inflated rhetoric and the clashing swords of the political and religious combatants; and the main part of this book will be a record of the intellectual and military adventures of abnormal leaders who often

represented nobody but themselves; and in particular a history of Oliver Cromwell, who was so great a man, both in his vices and his virtues, that he must always stand out apart from his fellows.

When Cromwell had arrived in London as a member of the parliament of 1628, he had arrived, as we know from his doctor, in an 'exceedingly melancholy condition' – in other words, in a state of 'nerves.' So it is unlikely that he judged the political position with any scientific accuracy. It is difficult to know what he thought at this time, for we have very few records to put in as evidence but the one outstanding fact that remains is of the greatest importance, namely, his first and only speech in this Parliament. But that was not spoken until the third session; and he had sat silently listenting to a great deal before that.

The tradition (already mentioned) that Oliver had wrestled with Charles when they were boys is by no means an improbable story; but the first certain meeting of the two men, face to face, was when Charles came to open the parliament of 1628. It was the occasion when he uttered that most insolent sentence, already mentioned, in which he said he would scorn to threaten any but his equals. Those words must have left a deep mark on Cromwell's mind. A man who, after the Puritan method, was on terms of the utmost intimacy and spiritual communion with his God, must have been disinclined to listen in patience when his earthly king so obviously treated him with contempt.

The tempers on both sides, after so many years of friction, had risen to a dangerous warmth; and Cromwell and his fellow-parliamentarians failed to see that if

Charles had indeed threatened them he had some reason. The honour of England had been staked on bringing help to the town of La Rochelle; and money must somehow be found to redeem the failure of Buckingham's last effort. What Charles had said in his speech to the House of Commons was that if they continued to refuse to grant supplies he would: 'in discharge of my conscience use those other means which God hath put into my hands, to save that which the follies of some particular men may otherwise hazzard to lose.' It was quite true in a national sense; and it was so like the foolish Charles to spoil a tolerably good case by those offensive words about 'my equals.' The day was to come when Cromwell was to do more than threaten parliament by words; when he was to abuse the members in the language of a bargee, and turn them out by threat of soldiers at the door. If one observes closely, it will be seen that Cromwell learned most of his methods from Charles; and he improved on them by going one better after every lesson.

The king's threatening words had sunk deep; and instead of granting money the Commons turned to consider how to stop the king imprisoning those who refused to pay the loans and other taxes which had not been voted in parliament. The Puritan leader, Sir John Eliot, gave Cromwell his first experience of a great display of parliamentary oratory. He declared that all the liberties of England were at stake. If the demand for taxation (by the king's will alone) were obeyed, then: 'Upon this dispute not alone our lands and goods are enjoyed, but all that we call ours. These rights, these privileges, which made our fathers freemen, are in

question. If they be not now the more carefully preserved, they will I fear render us to posterity less free, less worthy than our fathers.' Then Eliot added that the people who were mainly responsible for this attack on their national liberties were 'that false party in religion which to their Romish idol sacrifice all other interests and respects.' He referred, of course, to the Anglian ecclesiastics who were preaching the divine right of kings to do anything they pleased to consider necessary.

Such was the political atmosphere in which Cromwell learned his first parliamentary lessons. It must have suited him in every way; and confirmed all his primitive suspicions that the king and his courtiers and bishops were part of a vast plot to take away the liberties of England. This is not a parliamentary history, and it is sufficient to say that after much eloquence and wrangling at last the king agreed to accept the Petition of Right as a legal statement of the privileges and liberties of purse and person which the Commons claimed to be the ancient law of their land. Most of the historians have assumed that this petition was made by the king's assent into a statute of the realm. But the royal assent was not given in the customary form; and when it was printed by Charles's order, a still vaguer form of assent was used – which was of no legal significance whatever. It was the first direct lesson to the silently watching Cromwell that the word of this king was not a word of honour. Further, the concession was only gained after threats and evasions on the part of Charles, and a refusal of urgently necessary money on the part of the Commons. Neither party was convinced, mainly

because both were more given to emotions and prejudices than to facts. It is necessary to realise that the Englishmen of this period were not of the temperament which we expect to find in the public men of to-day; and a famous scene which occurred in the House of Commons before the conclusion of the Petition of Right is a significant piece of evidence which will illuminate the environment in which Cromwell's own mind was being moulded. It happened thus.

On June 4th, 1628, Charles sent a message to the House saying that the session would end in a week, and that they must at once grant him money and cease criticising his rule. On the morning of June 5th a still curter message had come from the king forbidding the Commons to 'lay any scandal or aspersion upon the State, Government, or ministers thereof.' It is almost impossible for the modern reader to imagine the effect which this order had on the members of that parliament. Thomas Alured, the member for Malton, wrote a letter to a friend describing what happened, and his letter has survived. It runs: 'Yesterday was a day of desolation among us in Parliament, and this day, we fear, will be the day of our dissolution. Upon Tuesday Sir John Eliot moved that as we intended to furnish his Majesty with money we should also supply him with counsel.' Alured then described the arrival of the king's messages and continued: 'Sir Robert Philips of Somersetshire spoke, and mingled his words with weeping. Mr. Pym did the like. Sir Edward Coke, overcome with passion, seeing the desolation likely to ensue, was forced to sit down when he began to speak, by the abundance of tears. Yea the Speaker in his speech could not refrain

from weeping and shedding of tears. Besides a great many whose grief made them dumb.' It was then decided to go into Committee, a method of procedure which set the Speaker free from the chair; and off he fled to the king, also weeping.

Can anyone visualise a modern assembly of national representatives behaving like that to-day? It denotes a psychology very different from our own; but very much akin to the emotional passion which we shall find sweeping through Oliver Cromwell's frame at many crises in his career. The scene helps us to understand this man as well as his age. It was amid these scenes that the Petition of Right had been carried into such legal form as it ever possessed. There was an emotional outburst of joy in the House of Commons when they had dragged some kind of assent from the reluctant king; who then informed them, in the gracious words of a man who is priggishly certain that he is always right, that 'I assure you that my maxim is that the people's liberties strengthen the King's prerogative, and that the King's prerogative is to defend the people's liberties. You see how ready I have shown myself to satisfy your demands . . . whereof if the Parliament have not a happy conclusion the sin is yours; I am free of it.' Such words could only have come from one who was a good deal of a humbug or else exceedingly blind to the facts. But they satisfied the Commons, who cheered once more; and then the wave of emotion surged into the streets of London, where the bells of the churches pealed and bonfires blazed for joy.

It sounded very well, but it all came to very little. As already said, neither side was really satisfied. Within

a few days of the passing of the Petition of Right the Commons had impeached the churchman, Manwaring, for writing in defence of the divine right of his king; and he was fined and imprisoned. Then they turned to a further remonstrance against the king's methods of ruling, declaring: 'The principal cause of which evils and dangers we conceive to be the excessive power of the Duke of Buckingham . . . and our humble desire is that your excellent Majesty will be pleased to take into your princely consideration whether it be safe for your Majesty and your kingdom to continue him either in his great offices, or in his place of nearness and counsel about your sacred person.'

For their answer, they got a few words of scarcely veiled contempt; and Charles gave Buckingham his hand to kiss in the very face of the assembled Commons. One is justified in thinking that Cromwell, so far silent in the House, must have been chafing at the bit. He had not the mind to appreciate the niceties of debate and the give-and-take of political affairs. The futility of it all must have been preparing his emotional soul for some more drastic method of teaching Charles Stuart to pay due attention to the wishes of his subjects. The proceedings of Cromwell's first parliament are so important a part of his life because they turned him from a humble statesman into a revolutionary soldier.

Then the dispute went back to taxation again. The Commons said that the king had admitted, in the Petition of Right, that he could not collect custom duties without their consent, whereas the words of the Petition did not cover that manner of raising money.

There were more remonstrances by the Commons and counter threats by the king; and then Charles suddenly appeared in the House of Lords, in such haste that he had not found all the customary state robes; and summoned the Commons to hear another of those speeches which were so full of boorish manners and childish petulance. He said he had come to prorogue the parliament, and would deign to tell them the reason: 'though I must avow that I owe an account of my actions but to God alone.' He continued that he had heard that they intended to present another remonstrance: 'to take my chief profit of tonnage and poundage – one of the chief maintenances of the Crown.' In other words, Charles clearly showed that he intended to keep himself free from the control of parliament as long as he could.

Before parliament met again on January 20th, 1629, there were some radical changes in the situation. The Duke of Buckingham had been assassinated by a disappointed officer; and Thomas Wentworth, perhaps the cleverest administrator in England, had gone over from the side of the Parliamentary party to the side of the king. Further, Charles had showed his teeth, in more than a theological sense, by promoting Laud and Montaigne, two of the bishops whom the Commons most hated for their 'high' dogmas and anti-democratic principles; and to rub salt into the wound he then pardoned the impeached Manwaring and gave him a rectory. Finally came the disaster of the fall of La Rochelle by the subtle skill of Richelieu, which reduced Charles's foreign policy to ruins.

The House of Commons met on January 20th, 1629,

in a very bad temper. They had discovered that Charles had ordered the Petition of Right to be printed with his first irregular form of assent – which, no judge could have recognised as an Act of Parliament – instead of the second assent, which at least looked more regular. It was a low trick worthy of a card-sharper. Then the king had been levying the custom duties without their consent, and his officers were seizing the goods of the merchants who would not pay the tonnage and poundage demanded. Again, the bishop of Durham had written a *Book of Devotions* which drove the Calvinists into a state of religious hysterics. The fanatics on both sides were squabbling as to the precise position of the communion table, the sign of the cross, and the 'setting up of pictures, lights, and images in churches.' About a month before Parliament assembled Charles had published a declaration which every clergyman was to read when he was appointed to a benefice. It was more or less the normal Anglican faith, but the mere mention of the Thirty-nine Articles and the royal supremacy over the Church was like waving a red rag before the Puritan herd. In short, there were all the elements of discord which had been growing worse and worse since the blundering Stuarts arrived in England in 1603.

The king saw that matters were critical, and, for a wonder, attempted to be conciliatory. He said he did not claim the custom duties as his by royal right: 'but that it ever was, and still is, his meaning to enjoy them as a gift of his people,' and what he had prematurely taken was by urgent necessity of meeting the national needs, 'not by any right which he assumed.' The Commons were temporarily pleased by this concession

to their power, and ascribed this change in the royal temper to the death of Buckingham. But they were soon to know better; they had always been on the wrong road when they attacked the duke instead of putting the responsibility on his master. An evil fate was working to prevent any reconciliation between Charles and his parliament; and before anything could be settled about the financial needs of the kingdom, the Commons plunged into theological arguments which were of no interest to the man of simple common sense.

Rouse led off with a flow of rhetoric: 'I desire that it may be considered how the see of Rome doth eat into our religion; and fret into the banks and walls of it, the laws and statutes of this realm. . . . And since Popery is a confused heap of errors, casting down kings before Popes, the precepts of God before the traditions of men. . . . I desire that we may look into the very belly and bowels of this Trojan horse to see if there be not men in it ready to open the gates to Romish tyranny, and Spanish monarchy, for an Arianian is the spawn of a Papist.'

That is a typical Puritan speech which reveals most of the terrors and conceits behind its creed: the dread of Spain, the fear of losing ecclesiastical estates, the emotional pride that the Puritan had found the truth and that all other beliefs were mere superstitions. Pym followed and worked himself into a passion about the 'bringing in of superstitious ceremonies amongst us, especially at Durham, by Mr. Cozens, as angels, crucifixes, saints, altars, candles on Christmas day, burnt in the church after the Popish manner.'

It was in the excited theological debates of this

session that Oliver Cromwell first raised his recorded voice in the history of the English parliament. One can easily imagine how the passions of the Puritan speakers had stirred the soul of this emotional and morbid man who was himself going through the exhilarating process of personal salvation. The point at which he intervened was concerning an alleged attempt by the bishops to suppress the Puritan faith. Oliver Cromwell rose to tell the House a short story about his own schoolmaster, Dr. Beard of Huntingdon. The speech is added in full, as it was reported: 'Mr. Cromwell, saith that Dr. Beard told him that one Dr. Alablaster did at the Spital preach in a sermon tenets of Popery, and Beard being to repeat the same, the now Bishop of Winton, then Bishop of Lincoln, did send for Dr. Beard, and charge him, as his diocesan, not to preach any doctrine contrary to that which Alablaster had delivered, and when Dr. Beard did, by the advise of Bishop Felton, preach against Dr. Alablaster's sermon and person, Dr. Neile, now Bishop of Winton, did reprehend him, the said Beard, for it.' That is all we have of Cromwell's first speech in the House of Commons; though Carlyle (and other historians who have followed him blindly) has added to it various picturesque remarks by confusing it, as the accurate Professor Gardiner has pointed out, with other men's speeches delivered on other occasions.

Such was Cromwell's first suggestion for the reform of the many evils into which his country had fallen. When the whole government was in confusion from top to toe, Oliver was only roused to speech in order that he might warn his fellow-countrymen of the

importance that his old schoolmaster should be allowed to say what he thought of Dr. Alablaster's sermon on 'the tenets of Popery.' To the modern mind, looking back on the controversy, with the impartiality of three centuries of weighing the evidence, it seems a singularly unimportant matters. There are no signs that if England had been free to hear all Dr. Beard's arguments it would have been a wiser or happier country. Indeed, there are many indications that if there had been much increase in the dull bigotry and fanaticism of his sect, Englishmen would have become very objectionable and unhappy people. Dr. Beard's book on *The Theatre of God's Judgment Displayed*, was calculated to give the gravest anxiety to all who could not 'find salvation' in the Puritan religion; for it pointed out various worldly punishments which would fall on the unconverted. Professor Gardner hints that it was the book which had scared Cromwell into the Puritan fold.

The offending Bishop Neile had done little more than attempt to silence all this useless bickering between the rival fanatics of Rome and Geneva; and if he had succeeded, it is probable that the vast majority of English men and women, who were people of normal common sense, would the more quickly have found a way to a reasonable compromise that would have brought national peace.

Whipped on by the rhetoric of Eliot and the craftier words and intrigues of Pym, the Commons were ready to attack anyone who dared to contradict a sentence of their sectarian creed. The name of Neile roused them to a passion. 'In this Lord is contracted all the danger we fear,' was Eliot's summing up of the bishop. To

most people to-day it sounds a ridiculous conclusion; unless it be cynically dismissed as an instance of the still customary methods by which the political Opposition seize any stick by which they can beat the back of the Government. There is, in fact, a good deal of evidence that some of the Puritan leaders played the religious card, not from any very strong conviction, but mainly because it was likely to confuse the issue and gain them the support of useful and noisy political allies. When, for example, the main desire of the Parliamentarians was to avoid paying taxes – a very human failing – it was a great assistance if such as Oliver Cromwell would get up to attract the attention, and waste the time, of the House on the affairs of Dr. Beard and Bishop Neile.

While mystics like Cromwell and his kind were resisting the dangers of Rome and its English imitations, more worldly men were resisting the collectors of the king's irregular custom duties; and these two matters of taxation and religion, so strangely yet intimately related, continued to be debated in the House without any satisfaction to either party. Since there is no other record of any personal interference by Cromwell, these debates are a part of general history rather than of his biography. But they are a part of his life, since they were his early education in politics, and must have moulded his mind. The last great scene of this parliament must be mentioned in more detail.

The Commons had grown more and more persistent in their demands for what they called 'reform.' The king, in alarm, threatened a dissolution. On March 2nd the Speaker, Finch, in Charles's name announced

that there would be an adjournment until March 10th. He was answered by cries of defiance, for the members strongly suspected that they would never be allowed to meet again. Eliot rose to speak, and the Speaker also rose to leave the chair, by which act the House would have been dismissed for that sitting. Two members sprang forward and held the Speaker in the chair by force. 'God's wounds, you shall sit until we please to rise,' said Denzil Holles, one of the members who held him down. Some of the royalist members ran to the Speaker's assistance, and he freed himself and started for the door. But the majority of the House was against him, and stood between him and escape. Again he was seized and pushed by force back into the chair, and held there while Eliot moved a resolution; but Finch refused, with much trembling apology, to put it formally before the House.

The royalist members now tried to leave the chamber, but the majority would not risk this possibility of carrying a message for assistance; and when the Sergeant-at-Arms hesitated to obey a general request to have the door locked, Sir Miles Hobart did it himself and placed the key in his pocket. Then the triumphant victors of this miniature revolution turned on the now imprisoned Speaker, and again demanded that he should put their resolution of the grievance they had against the king's government. The Speaker protested that he acknowledged he was the servant of the House, and Strode made the grim response: 'The Scripture saith, " his servants ye are whom ye obey." If you will not obey us you are not our servant.' But Speaker Finch was not ready to make a landmark in the history of

parliament. Hitherto, the Speaker had been more the servant of the Crown than of the House; and Finch, hung in the air, as it were, between the old system and the new, after the manner of timid men begged for a compromise. 'I am not the less the King's servant for being yours. I will not say I will not put the reading of the paper to the question, but I must say I dare not.' It is clear that the quarrel between king and parliament was getting near the climax; and this much embarrassed Speaker was a pitiable spectacle of a timid person who had wandered into the field of battle and got, by accident, between the rapidly approaching rival armies.

The House then proceeded to its hurried business without paying further attention to the Speaker – except holding him in the chair! Eliot began once more the rather dreary tale of the evils of the High Church Papists; and, as usual, he carefully blended religion and taxation by first accusing the Lord Treasurer of being 'the head of all the Papists,' and then said that his treatment of the custom duties was part of a crafty plot to ruin trade and put the state at the mercy of its foreign enemies – by which he meant Catholic Spain and France. He then made a formal protest against false religion and illegal taxation.

The discussion was continuing when a knocking at the door warned the House that help was coming to the Speaker and his royalist supporters. Charles had sent a command that the Sergeant should remove the mace – which would mean that the House was no longer legally sitting. The order was ignored. Then another continuation of the confused discussion, and a second knocking to announce that the king's soldiers were

coming to break open the door. By this time Eliot had lost all hope of formally moving his resolution, and had burnt the paper in disgust or despair. The knocking was at the door again, and Holles hurriedly wrote out the resolutions from memory, read them to the House and, ignoring the Speaker, put them himself to the assembly. They were carried with shouts of approval; the Commons then immediately voted that they should adjourn, and the door was opened. A week later the king dissolved parliament; and that assembly disappeared from English history for eleven years, until 1640.

Cromwell had played his part in the first revolutionary step in the seventeenth century war between Crown and Commons, and had learned his first lesson of force as a political weapon which he was afterwards to bring to such despotic perfection: at first on the field of battle and later in this House of Commons where he had first seen it used. He had been thus taught that even a parliamentary debate could sometimes not be conducted without holding the Speaker in the chair and locking out the king's soldiers.

CHAPTER VI

THE PERIOD WITHOUT PARLIAMENT

After the very silent and yet most instructive year in the parliament of 1628–9, Oliver Cromwell became once more a rather insignificant country gentleman of the humbler sort, in his home at Huntingdon, where he set himself again to the business of farming and local government; while his future chief rival, Charles Stuart, set himself to the more difficult task of governing England without the advice of Lords and Commons in parliament assembled. Although he was not to take Cromwell into his confidence and the Huntingdon squire was to have no share in Charles's experiment, yet it will be a necessary part of this biography to give an outline of the king's actions during this period. For the chief business of Cromwell's life was to fight his king, and ultimately cut off his head, on the charge that Charles did not know how to govern England with reasonable efficiency; and indeed not even with decent justice. So it is obvious that it cannot be in any way decided whether Cromwell was justified in his attack on the monarchy until there is some way of judging whether his indictment was true or false. So the personal government of Charles is, rather paradoxically, also the personal biography of Oliver Cromwell.

At the same time that Charles was engaged in his

personal rule, Cromwell was acquiring a knowledge of the local side of public administration, in which, indeed, he gained more popular distinction than he had won in his first parliament; and judicious minds will continue to believe that these early years of obscure local affairs were more useful to his fellow-citizens than any of his more sensational deeds that have been recorded in the general history books. Rather over a year after the break up of the parliament in 1629, and Cromwell's return to Huntingdon, a small revolution happened in the civic affairs of that little country town. Hitherto there had been a survival of those comparatively democratic institutions of local government which were commoner in the mediæval feudal age than they were to become during these later times of so-called democracies, constructed according to the rhetoric of professional politicians. Huntingdon had been ruled by two bailiffs and a common council of twenty-four annually elected representatives. But these democratic habits of government by the people had been broken by the new Tudor autocracy, and a royal charter in 1630 replaced the annual councillors by twelve aldermen chosen for life, who were to elect a mayor from among themselves. In Sir Charles Firth's concise phrase: 'An oligarchy replaced a democracy.'

Noble says that Cromwell and Dr. Beard (who had so long haunted his early pupil) and Robert Barnard were named in the new charter as justices of the peace for Huntingdon. But the new constitution did not find favour in the eyes of the inhabitants who had been deprived of their ancient freedom by this small group of people who had elected themselves rulers for life.

When the tumult arose over this transaction, Oliver appears to have agreed, to some extent at least, with the protesting democrats, who said that by the new charter they were threatened with a loss of their rights of feeding cattle, and so on, upon the common lands of the town.

It is not quite clear why Cromwell first took office under the charter and then turned against it, as he did with such passion that he was summoned by the Privy Council to appear before it to answer a charge of making 'disgraceful and unseemly speeches' to the town's new mayor and recorder, the above-mentioned Barnard, a lawyer, who appeared to have been the man who artfully engineered the whole affair of the new charter, with the intention of getting himself made the recorder, as he successfully accomplished. Whether Cromwell was angry at being one of the duped, or whether, out of a sheer sense of justice, he came to the defence of the humbler townsmen, is still a secret of the book of judgment – like a good deal of the life of this mystical man.

But his language was so violent that the Privy Council locked Cromwell up for a month or so, until he was tried in December 1630. It can scarcely have soothed the prisoner's temper when the case was adjourned for the arbitration of the Earl of Manchester, who was one of the same wealthy Montague family that had bought up the broken Cromwell estate of Hinchinbrook. However, his decision was of a conciliatory kind; for he found that the town charter should certainly be modified in order 'that the number of men's cattle of all sorts which they now keep, according to order and

usuage upon the commons, shall not be abridged or altered.'

It is concerning the matter of Cromwell's violent and uncontrolled temper that the incident is specially interesting to the student of this man; for it is an early indication of that psychological condition which was such a vital factor in Oliver's whole life. In this case, the Earl of Manchester reported that the accused acknowledged that his words had been 'spoken in heat and passion, and desired to be forgotten; and I found Mr. Cromwell very willing to hold friendship with Mr. Barnard, who, with a good will remitting all the unkind passages past, entertained the same. So I left all parties reconciled.'

Amongst other methods of raising money out of a land whose parliament refused to vote supplies, Charles went back to an ancient law which compelled every man of a 'gentleman's' estate to take up his knighthood, which denoted his military service to the king. Cromwell refused to do this in 1630, and paid a ten-pound fine by way of punishment – which was exactly what Charles desired. It is of the period just before he left Huntingdon that we have an early surviving letter dated April 1st, 1631. It is all about a hawk that had been found bearing his name on its label, which is perhaps why Carlyle overlooked it and gave first place to a later letter which is all about religion and preaching. Carlyle had also dismissed a still earlier letter of 1626 (asking a Cambridge friend to stand as godfather for his son Richard, the future second Protector) as 'of the last degree of insignificance,' having no signs of divine grace in it of the Cromwellian touch.

About 1631 Cromwell sold up some of the family estate at Huntingdon and moved a few miles down the river to the neighbouring little town of St. Ives, where he was within twelve miles or so of the town of Cambridge and his old university. His life here, until he went to Ely in 1636, seems to have been uneventful in the public sense. Privately he had invested the proceeds of the Huntingdon sale in setting himself up as a cattle grazier. There is no sign of particular worldly prosperity, but one of his modern biographers has told us, after the manner of Carlyle, that 'striving after godliness was his chiefest care. . . . Under this application of piety the farm did not thrive, but Oliver's soul grew rich in grace.'

In this St. Ives's period we have the first important Cromwell letter. It was dated January 11th, 1636, and is addressed to a 'Mr. Storie at the Sign of the Dog in the Royal Exchange, London.' It appears that this gentleman had contributed a sum of money to pay the income of a Puritan preacher or lecturer who was saving the souls of the people of Huntingdon. The money had, for some reason not explained, ceased to arrive, and Cromwell was writing to Storie to urge him to recontinue this allowance, for 'You know, Mr. Storie, to withdraw the pay is to let fall the lecture: for who goeth to warfare at his own cost?' This is, among worldly people, a very palpable fact; but it is interesting to have this confirmation that the Puritan preachers, like Cromwell's Ironsides, were a mercenary army, well paid for their enthusiasm.

Cromwell in this letter goes on to tell Storie: 'to build material temples is judged a work of piety, but they

that produce spiritual food . . . they are the men truly pious. Such a work as this was your erecting the lecture in our country; in the which you placed Dr. Welles, a man for goodness and industry, and ability to do every way, not short of any I know in England: and I am persuaded that sithence his coming, the Lord hast by him wrought much good amongst us. It only remains now that He who first moved you to this, put you forward to the continuance thereof: it was the Lord . . . and surely, Mr. Storie, it were a piteous thing to see a lecture fall . . . in these time, wherein we see they are suppressed, with too much haste and violence, by the enemies of God his truth. Far be it that so much guilt should stick in your hands, who live in a city so renowned for the clear shining light of the gospel . . . I beseech you therefor in the bowels of Christ Jesus put it forward, and let the good man have his pay.'

There are most of the elements of the coming civil war in this apparently domestic letter. We see the city of London, 'so renowned for the clear shining light of the gospel' – as it was known to the merchants of the Royal Exchange – the headquarters of the Puritan faith, and the chief financiers and organisers of the war; and this city is already engaged in sending forth lecturers who will instruct the people of the country districts to avoid the lies of Laud's Anglican priests who are preaching the doctrine of the divine right of kings. Cromwell begs for further subsidies from London to increase the activities of Puritan lecturers who are not in that profession for their health or any mystical desire for martyrdom. Mrs. Lomas reminds us in a note to her edition of

Carlyle's *Letters and Speeches* that the Dr. Welles of this letter became the chaplain to Lord Essex's regiment, and that many sums were paid to him on Essex's warrants.

Then, again, it is now entirely clear that Cromwell had 'found the light' himself; we already get his mature theological style – 'it was the Lord,' . . . 'I beseech you therefore in the bowels of Christ Jesus,' and so on. He had, by this time, been amply instructed, by the speeches of his fellow-members of the late House of Commons, that the safety and liberty of the English nation was, in some miraculous yet certain way, bound up with the destruction of the bishops and the triumph of the Puritans 'at the Sign of the Dog in the Royal Exchange'; while Dr. Beard, D.D., that dark shadow over his pupil's whole life, was still living, only a few miles away, to remind all slackers that he had proved, in *The Theatre of God's Judgment Displayed*, that immediate disasters would follow disobedience to God's commands – and Oliver had already decided that God could not possibly give any command than one in accordance with the faith held by the men of the Royal Exchange.

Cromwell was now thirty-six years old, and had long ago fixed his essential ideas, which always remained very much what they were when in his childish days he was mainly guided by the possibility of a flogging from Dr. Beard. If it had not been for that reverend gentleman and his philosophy of life and death, it is most unlikely that his pupil would have beheaded Charles I. But a man whose nerves had been rattled into melancholia by the dread of eternal fires was not likely to play fast and loose with his soul by sparing a king

who did not fit into Dr. Beard's theology. Besides, Mr. Storie of the Royal Exchange had been made one of the trustees to whom Parliament had entrusted the sale of the bishops' lands, and if Charles Stuart ever came back to power it was almost certain that many pious Puritans would be compelled to part with profitable investments and incomes. So, in short, the larger part of Oliver Cromwell's career is more or less concealed or revealed in this early letter.

On the day on which it was written John Hampden and the parishioners of the parish of Great Kimble refused to pay the Ship-money tax that had been imposed by Charles without the consent of parliament. But Cromwell, Hampden's cousin, was to remain of no account in national affairs for some years yet. He continued to be a small country gentleman intent on his own business, and particularly his soul; yet he was steadily developing a larger public spirit which made him, in a growing way, a leader amongst his neighbours. We have seen how already he had lost his temper (and his liberty) on behalf of the commoners of Huntingdon. Something of the same on a larger scale was to happen at St. Ives, and still more at Ely, whither he now moved.

In the beginning of 1636 his mother's brother, Sir Thomas Steward, died at Ely, and Oliver (who had once tried to have Sir Thomas certified as a lunatic, as we have seen) inherited the greater part of his property. This, in the main, was the farming of the Cathedral tithes which an earlier ancestor Steward had once held as the Catholic Prior of the Ely ecclesiastical estates before the Reformation. His conscience was elastic

enough to allow him to become the first Protestant Dean of Ely, and his descendants had managed to cling to the same estates as laymen, and had now passed them on to Cromwell.

It was at this time that Oliver would seem to have conquered all his doubts and hesitation on the subject of theology. He was now, after all his mental crises, an almost fanatical Puritan of the extreme left. As owner of estates which had once belonged to the Church of Rome, and would, in all probability, return to Rome if ever a Catholic monarch sat on the English throne, Cromwell was consumed with a conviction that the Papist doctrine was a devilish faith which would drag England back into damnation. The cynic might think that this Protestant theology would be more convincing if it had been less complicated with more worldly things, and he will note that a very large number of the leaders of the Puritan rebellion were likewise unable to examine the title-deeds of their estates without a warm glow of Protestant enthusiasm.

It was on October 13th, 1638, during this residence at Ely, that Cromwell wrote the letter: 'to my beloved cousin, Mrs. St. John,' which is so full of the character of the man that it must be given in its complete form, for it will help the reader of it to understand a great many deeds of Cromwell's life to which no clue can be found in the more stately, but far less revealing, documents which were written in the offices of the government departments. The official papers and the correspondence of the secretaries of state are the last place where the truth will reveal itself.

This confidant of Oliver's inner mind was his first

ELY CATHEDRAL

Photograph, Will F. Taylor

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cousin, who had married the distinguished Oliver St. John, the lawyer who argued the case against Ship-money when John Hampden refused to pay it. This most famous case of constitutional law had been heard at the end of 1637, so when St. John's wife received her cousin's letter she was already one of that small group of people who were making the great civil war. This relationship is a useful reminder how much this national confusion was the work of a comparatively small number of men who were on the terms of closest intimacy, and often of kinship. So many revolutions in history have been the work of small cliques of self-interested persons, who have not taken the people into their confidence until they needed them to die on the field of battle, and so often have forgotten them at the hour of victory. The letter to Mrs. St. John runs thus:

'Dear Cousin – I thankfully acknowledge your love in your kind remembrance of me upon this opportunity. Alas, you do too highly prize my lines and my company. I may be ashamed to own your expressions, considering how unprofitable I am, and the mean improvement of my talent.

'Yet to honour my God by declaring what he hath done for my soul, in this I am confident, and I will be so. Truly, then, this I find: That He giveth springs in a dry and barren wilderness where no water is. I live (you know where) in Mesheck, which they say signifies *Prolonging*; in Kedar, which signifies *Blackness*: yet the Lord forsaketh me not. Though He do prolong, yet He will (I trust) bring me to his tabernacle, to his resting place. My soul is with the congregation of the first-

born, my body rests in hope, and if here I may honour my God either by doing or by suffering, I shall be most glad.

'Truly no poor creature hath more cause to put forth himself in the cause of God than I. I have had plentiful wages before hand, and I am sure I shall never earn the least mite. The Lord accept me in His Son, and give me to walk in the light, as He is the light. He it is that enlighteneth our blackness, our darkness. I dare not say He hideth his face from me. He giveth me to see light in his light. One beam in a dark place hath exceeding much refreshment in it: blessed be His Name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine! You know what my manner of life hath been. Oh, I lived and loved darkness, and hated the light; I was a chief, the chief of sinners. This is true: I hated godliness, yet God had mercy on me. O the riches of His mercy. Praise Him for me; – pray for me, that He who hath begun a good work would perfect it in the day of Christ.

'Salute all my friends in that Family whereof you are yet a member. I am much bound unto them for their love. I bless the Lord for them; and that my son, by their procurement, is so well. Let him have your prayers, your counsel; let me have them.

'Salute your Husband and Sister from me· He is not a man of his word: He promised to write about Mr. Wrath of Epping; but as yet I receive no letters: – put him in mind to do what with conveniency may be done for the poor Cousin I did solicit him about.

'Once more farewell. The Lord be with you: so prayeth your truly loving Cousin,

OLIVER CROMWELL.

'My wife's service and love presented to all her friends.'

This is clearly the letter of a man who was governed far more by his emotions than by his reason. Except for the final passage, begging that something may be done for the poor cousin, there is practically no matter of fact mentioned in the whole letter. The two main paragraphs are more directly addressed to Oliver's own soul than to Mrs. St. John, and are of that overstrung nature – which except for its beauties of literary style, its robust strength as a piece of entirely convincing prose – is more like a revivalist prayer-meeting than any intellectual exercise. It, on the whole, rings quite true and sincere. It is not the letter of a hypocrite. But it very definitely is the expression of a man who could get to closer grips with his inner self than with any phenomenon of the external world. It has the manner of a man whose chief test of truth was his own opinion of it, and who might easily overlook the opinions of the rest of mankind. Even in a friendly note to his young cousin he cannot forget that most fundamental fact of Cromwell's existence – his own soul, and its creakings and twistings. It is the letter of a man who was to govern England with much the same unconsciousness of his audience – his subjects – as in this letter he almost forgot his cousin. He was always to consult of his own soul, and forgot to take the opinion of the English people and their traditions.

Yet, nevertheless, it is the letter of a man built on the grand scale. There is no sign of degeneracy – unless it be degenerate to be a poet who could write after the

manner of the best Hebrew psalms. There is also an obvious tender regard for his friends and relations to whom the writer sends messages of courteous affection. On the whole a very interesting man, yet very annoying, if one did not chance to be of the same small sect. But all great men are paradoxical.

Cromwell, while at Huntingdon, had already taken some interest in the democratic liberties of the town. At Ely the same struggle between the rich and the poor was happening on a far bigger scale, in a way that is very typical of the times. The drainage of the fens of the south-eastern midlands of England had become a prominent problem of national development in the early Stuart period. Increasing intercourse with the Dutch had taught more primitive England many ideas on the matter of reclaiming marsh lands. The Earl of Bedford – the head of a family that had done so well out of Roman ecclesiastical lands – about 1630 was made the head of a company which undertook to drain the 'Great Level' fens round Ely. He was promised 43,000 acres as his share of the land when it was reclaimed; some was to go to the Crown, some to other shareholders, and the rest to a fund to keep the drainage system in working order. By 1637 it was declared that the work was finished, and that shareholders should have their promised shares.

Here the trouble began. The other shareholders said that Bedford was getting too much. Then it was declared that the work had not been done well enough to drain the area according to the contract, and so the shareholders had not earned their grants of land, in any case. Thereupon the king interfered in 1638 and

eventually took the work into the direct hands of the Crown. Of course, the Puritan party set up a cry that their poor earl was being defrauded of his property by the king; but seeing that Bedford and his fellow shareholders were left with land estimated to bring a yearly income of £60,000 as interest on the £100,000 they had invested in the drainage company, the complaint may be put down to more smart Puritan propaganda against their political enemies. It is a good example of the grasping habits of the Puritan leaders.

But it was not merely a question of the king against the earl. There was a large population of rather miscellaneous specimens of humanity that had, in the course of centuries, made their living on the fens: as fishermen and willow-cutters, and such-like. They had probably been there in unbroken line since Hereward and his men had defied William the Conqueror and his invading army six hundred years before. These true natives rose in a local rebellion and began to break the new dykes. They put down their troubles to the Earl of Bedford, and thought that the king was protecting them by taking the drainage operations out of Bedford's hands. To a large extent this was true, and we shall find that one of the reasons for the Puritan hatred of Charles was that he often protected the peasants and smaller landowners against the callous new men who had become Puritan nobles and gentry by reforming the Roman Church.

But the interesting fact for the moment is that Oliver Cromwell, in some manner which is very vague, came to the rescue of the poor fen men also. Of course, conventional historians of the older school at once

assumed that he opposed the action of the king, but it seems clear that both Charles and Oliver were for once on the same side. It was certainly in full accord with Cromwell's earlier action at Huntingdon. But Sir Charles Firth, in his *Life of Cromwell*, prints an apparently contemporary document which runs: 'It was commonly reported by the commoners in Ely Fens and the Fens adjoining, that Mr. Cromwell of Ely had undertaken, they paying him a groat for every cow they had upon the commons, to hold the drainers in suit of law for five years, and that in the meantime they should enjoy every foot of their commons.' So it is possible that any action on Cromwell's part may have been a good business speculation, at the rate of a groat per head of cattle. But it is more probable that it arose out of genuine democratic fervour on his part, and the charge was made to meet expenses which, as a comparatively poor man, he could not reasonably have borne.

There was another instance of this same kind which happened beyond the time limit of this chapter, but will be most conveniently related in this place, with the similar cases already mentioned. The Earl of Manchester, the kinsman of the Montague who had bought the great Cromwell house at Hinchinbrook, had also bought land at St. Ives, Cromwell's second home. The inhabitants said it was common land which had been enclosed without their consent, but the earl, after the economic habits of these new Puritans, would not respect anyone's rights but his own. So the commoners took their case by petition to parliament in 1641, and, in the words of Clarendon who tells the

story at first hand, 'made loud complaint, as a great oppression, carried upon them with a very high hand, and supported by power.' The House of Lords took the side of their fellow peer, and sent down the trained bands to drive the commoners of St. Ives from their reseized lands. Whereupon the House of Commons appointed a committee to investigate the matter, and Clarendon was elected as its chairman. The rest of the story is best told in his own words:

'The Committee sat in the Queen's Court, and Oliver Cromwell being one of them, appeared much concerned to countenance the petitioners, who were numerous, together with their witnesses. the Lord Mandeville being likewise present . . . and by direction of the committee sitting covered. (Mandeville was the Earl of Manchester's son.) Cromwell . . . ordered the witnesses and petitioners in the method of the proceeding, and seconded and enlarged upon what they said with great passion; and the witnesses and persons concerned, who were a very rude kind of people, interrupted the council and witnesses on the other side with great clamour, when they said anything which did not please them; so that Mr. Hyde [the Lord Clarendon of after years] (whose office it was to oblige men of all sorts to keep order), was compelled to use some sharp reproofs and some threats . . . Cromwell in a great fury reproached the chairman for being partial, and that he discountenanced the witnessess by threatening them: the other appealed to the committee, which justified him, and declared that he behaved himself as he ought to do; which more inflamed him, who was already too much angry. Where upon any mention of matter of

fact, or the proceeding at or before the enclosure, Lord Mandeville desired to be heard, and with great modesty related what had been done, or explained what had been said, Mr. Cromwell did answer and reply upon him with so much indecency and rudeness, and in language so contrary and offensive, that every man would have thought that as their natures and manners were as opposite as it is possible, so their interest could never have been the same. In the end, his whole carriage was so tempestuous, and his behaviour so insolent, that the chairman found himself obliged to reprehend him; and to tell him, if he proceeded in the same manner, he would presently adjourn the committee, and the next morning complain to the House of him; which he never forgave; and took all occasions afterwards to pursue him with the utmost malice, to his death.'

Such is Clarendon's recollection of the scene, which he wrote at Montpellier in 1669, after he had been exiled by the restored Charles II. and his extremist supporters. Having been thus driven from his country by both Puritans and Cavaliers, the writer was likely to have the peculiarly detached and impartial judgment of a man who had found his friends and his enemies equally unreasonable; and this story of Cromwell is one of the most valuable records of his history. It reveals the Puritan soldier in his most candid moments – when he had lost his temper. This condition of nervous excitement, leading to violence of manner and speech, and general loss of control, was one of Oliver Cromwell's chief characteristics throughout life. There is ever repeated evidence that he was a man continually

likely to be swept off his feet by a wave of passion which must have made his intellect a negligible factor in his actions.

These three instances of Cromwell's early concern for the rights of the people of the peasant class are so cumulative in their effect that they cannot be mere accidents in his life. On the face, they are evidence of a sincere desire to protect the poor from the attack of their more powerful neighbours; and it is very noteworthy that in two of these early incidents of his career the oppressors were men who were to become famous leaders of the Puritan party. Cromwell had an elemental sense of human justice between man and man. It was, perhaps, a part of that still more fundamental sense of the social bond which is also an outstanding feature of his career. He had a firm grasp of the fact that man is a social being with rights and duties binding him to his fellows. His public life is, first and foremost, a magnificent display of social energy. He was continually doing the wrong thing to help his fellow-countrymen; but that he took his public responsibilities seriously is beyond all possible doubt. And a sense of justice, independent of class or race, is a fundamental part of that duty of social service for the public good.

Yet Cromwell was a man of very vast psychological depths, and it is dangerous for the biographer to generalise, or claim for him any clear characteristics. For then he is soon in the embarrassing position of having to explain how a man with a sense of justice and social responsibility could have behaved as he did later on in Ireland. The answer is that Cromwell's intellect was always at the mercy of his emotions. In other

words, he had a rather primitive mind. He was always likely to feel an emotion before he considered a fact.

Without any desire to be cynical, it is impossible to avoid seeing proof of this in the episode of the St. Ives's common lands which has been told above. Cromwell may have had all kinds of sympathy with the unprotected and the oppressed; yet it is hard to resist the suspicion that the violence of his outburst before Clarendon's committee was not altogether uninfluenced by the fact that the Lord Mandeville against whom he was debating, was a member of the Montague family that had supplanted the Cromwells as the chief people of Huntingdonshire. The day was to come, as we shall see, when Cromwell was to tell the Earl of Manchester to his face that England would not be in sound social health until he had lost his title and become plain Mr. Montague again. In view of the fact that Cromwell could work with many a lord and marry his daughters to peers whenever it suited his convenience, it is hard not to see in this outburst against the Montagues just an element of what in lesser men would be frankly called petty spite and jealousy. But whether that be so, it is amply clear that Oliver Cromwell could not argue very long before his intellect became fatigued, and he was too inclined to leave the decision to his less reasoned impulses.

It has been related above how Cromwell was spending his public life during the years when Charles I. refused to call a parliament. On the whole, those years were creditable to the man, and of service to the community. It is now necessary to see how Charles

Stuart, Cromwell's coming rival, was using the same years; for, as already pointed out, it is on the record of the royal government of this period that must, to some considerable extent, depend the judgment whether Cromwell and his followers were justified in pulling Charles off his throne with such a rough hand. This is not the place to write the history of Charles I.'s attempt to rule England without a parliament. It was an experiment of the greatest interest which should be read in full in the standard histories. For the moment the barest outline must suffice.

Those who seek evidence of Charles I.'s wisdom and his folly, of his justice and tyranny, will all alike be satisfied by their search. For Charles, like Cromwell, was a strange blending of contradictory things, which at length proved so irritating to the nerves of his subjects that it ended in civil war. It is quite a mistake to think that there was any very convincing reason for this violent end to the dispute between king and people. A recent modern scientific historian, Mr. F. C. Montague, after describing in detail the events of Charles I.'s personal government, without a parliament, between 1629 and 1637, when it reached its climax of autocracy, thus sums up the results: 'England enjoyed profound peace; taxation was not heavy; justice was fairly administered as between man and man; and the government showed reasonable consideration for the welfare of the common people. Trade still flourished, large tracts of the fens were reclaimed and the tokens of wealth and luxury were on every side. . . . The Puritans might complain of a persecution embittered by a contrast of the favour extended to Roman Catholics. But the Puritans

were a minority of the nation and an unpopular minority.'

Now that is not convincing evidence that England was on the verge of a civil war. On the contrary, it sounds like the beginning of Utopia; and any political party that, to-day, could guarantee such an ideal result would be elected to office with an overwhelming majority over all rivals. Yet strange to say, it was a result which cost Charles his head, and made Cromwell, the chief opponent and ender of all this national happiness, despot of England in Charles's place. This paradoxical result obviously needs some explanation.

It is clear that Charles went about his work in a most reckless and unconciliatory manner. When he dismissed his parliament of 1629, he had sent nine members of the House of Commons to prison, as a punishment for their rebellious conduct. Charles may have been foolish enough to imagine that if they held the Speaker in his chair until he did what they wished, then he, the king, had the right to hold them in prison until they had apologised. If he did so, it was the thought of a fool. For the main privilege of parliament was at stake, the right of free speech within its doors; and when the king charged Eliot, Holles and Valentine with a conspiracy, hatched in the House, to defy his orders, the prisoners quite properly refused to acknowledge the right of any court to try them for words and deeds done in parliament. Charles asked not for punishment, but for an apology and security that they would not repeat their offence. Holles did as he was asked and went free. But Eliot remained in prison until he died in 1631; and the other members, Strode and Valentine, were not

released until Charles was compelled to call another parliament in 1640.

All this was, in substance if not in name, the beginning of the civil war. Both sides had used force, and the king's force was the more unreasonable and tyrannical of the two. Charles continued to collect the custom duties, which were his chief source of income (beyond the royal estates) and nobody, except a few constitutional lawyers, would have worried very much, because an Act of Parliament does not make a tax any lighter than one collected by sole order of the Crown. But Charles, like most rulers, was ambitious to play a part in foreign politics; and indeed, quite rightly, thought it his duty to make England a strong international force in Europe. This meant more money, which probably the nation would have paid without resistance, if their king had possessed the wit to conceive of and carry through a sound diplomacy with success. But Charles had not an intellect of sufficient subtilty to manage foreign affairs. He never knew his own mind – which was perhaps a blessing in disguise, for in foreign affairs he was usually wrong. Thus, when Gustavus Adolphus won the Battle of Breitenfeld in 1631, Charles sent Sir Henry Vane to make a treaty with him; but before anything could be settled, this weathercock of a royal diplomatist had first turned to the emperor and then back to Gustavus, without pleasing either of them. His ambassador was very happily named Vane.

When Charles began angling for an alliance with Spain, and desired a fleet to clinch the bargain, he first had to find the money to build and maintain it. So he fell back, in 1634, on the Ship-money tax from the

port towns. In strict law he was probably entitled to levy this on his own authority. Anyhow, as France was threatening, his subjects paid as they were ordered. But when, in 1635, the ship-money was demanded from the whole kingdom as well as from the port towns, the legality was more doubtful; though the judges decided that the king was within his rights – and, on the whole, most constitutional lawyers to-day hold that their judgment was not an unfair decision in a doubtful case.

Then came a further levy of ship-money in 1636, which brought matters to a crisis, not so much because the ordinary man worried over nice points of constitutional law, but because the fleet never did anything much worth doing when it got to sea. But when Cromwell's cousin, John Hampden, refused to pay the tax, he had a deeper motive in view; for he and his fellow politicians were anxious to fight out the whole issue of parliament versus royal autocracy. However, the judges, by seven to five, said Charles was entitled to collect ship-money if he pleased. So the struggle went on for a time.

Charles's chief adviser at this time was William Laud, who had been Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. There is not much doubt that he was an honest, unselfish, public-spirited man, with a passion for doing the duties of his many offices with infinite pains. Dr. Holdsworth, the author of the great *History of English Law*, writes: 'His inflexible honesty irritated the courtiers.' Here, probably, is the real reason why he became, after Strafford, the chief target of the Puritan attack. He gave decision after decision, in the Star

Chamber and the Court of High Commission and in the Privy Council, which had no respect for anybody or thing except what he believed to be the truth. For an instance, there was his determined attempt to bring the corrupt Portland, the Lord Treasurer, to justice. What Laud could not tolerate was a man who was seeking his own interests at the expense of the state. Great names and high offices never protected a culprit against Laud's judgment.

But there was an easy way of finding a weak spot in the armour of such an honest man, when his enemies desired to crush him. For Laud had a very narrow mind when it came to points of the ritual, ceremonies and discipline of the Anglican Church. His Puritan enemies, seeking any stick with which to beat him down, said Laud was practically a Catholic of the Roman sect. But here, by the almost unanimous voice of history, they were wrong. Laud said (and he was truthful to the verge of bad manners) that he could never join the Roman Church while it remained in its existing unreformed condition. But the Anglican system he attempted to force down every one's throat by every theological and judicial stomach-pump the law would allow. He had far too simple a mind to be concerned about fine points of ecclesiastical philosophy; and would never have worried about a man's beliefs so long as he would show an outward discipline by performing the ceremonies of the Church. If a man would bow at the right moment, and consent to place the altar at the right spot in the church, then Laud's rather materialistic conscience would have been satisfied. What he wanted was a successful ecclesiastical pageant,

just as the third-rate general is satisfied with a smartly drilled and well-equipped army on review days.

Laud could be ruthlessly cruel at times – and all over points of a quite trivial kind which clashed with this cleric's narrow view of religion. For example, there is the case of Alexander Leighton, one of that Scottish race that has an irresistible mania for finding a theological reason for earthly affairs. He had written a book entitled *An Appeal to Parliament; or Sion's Pleas against Prelacy.* If anything was wrong in the world, he wrote, it was all the fault of the 'men of blood,' the 'knobs and wens and bunchy popist flesh,' the 'trumpery of Anti Christ'; by which choice language Leighton denoted the bishops. To find a remedy he called for a parliament to 'remove the wicked from the head, and take away the corruption and corroding dross from the silver argentry of the King. . . . Strike . . . at these troublers of Israel. Smite that Hagail in the fifth rib'; and ended by calling upon Charles I.'s parliament to resist the dissolution of 1629.

Now there were very few balanced people in the whole nation who would have bothered to listen to this hysteria. But Laud, who had the small mind that worries about small things, raised this molehill into a mountain by getting a terrible judgment passed on Leighton in the Star Chamber. He was to pay a fine of £10,000, be put in the pillory, whipped, branded on the face, and one ear was to be cut off and his nose slit. Laud spoke for two hours in his prosecuting speech, and when judgment was delivered 'gave thanks to God who had given him the victory over his enemies.'

Then there was the case of Prynne. After an attack

on the Anglo-Catholics, he appears to have come to the conclusion that the play writers were the source of all evil; and if there was anything more degrading on earth, it was a woman acting on the stage. It happened by chance that the Queen Henrietta Maria was acting at that time in a Court pastoral, and that she was an admirer of the theatrical art. Laud took a prominent part in the prosecution of Prynne on the ridiculous charge that to attack the stage was to attack the royal family that patronised it. So Prynne's ears were shorn off also.

Of course the whole affair was outrageous; and gave Laud's enemies another arrow. It was a pitiable blunder, for the onlooker of to-day can see that these fanatics should have been left in contemptuous silence, as they might well have been; for so little was the sane man interested in the matter that nobody much worried when Prynne's ears were cut the first time. But when he was charged again, in 1637, for attacking bishops, the ordinary citizen thought this was going too far, and he became a popular hero. The impartial historian can only record that whereas a nation, left to the mercy of the hysterical Prynnes and Leightons would have soon become bare of all culture and sane thinking; on the other hand, Laud as Chancellor of Oxford University showed that he was a man of taste and refinement, when his clerical prejudices were not involved, and would have done England good rather than harm by his rule, on the balance.

It is necessary in a life of Cromwell to give all this attention to Laud, for he was one of the chief rulers in the system against which the Puritans rose in rebellion.

The other type figure was Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. As Laud, with all its faults, was a more tolerable citizen and ruler than the half-crazy fanatics he persecuted, so likewise Strafford, with all his tyranny, on close inspection, turns out to have been an infinitely more desirable politician and administrator than the men of Cromwell's party who put him to death. As in the case of Laud, Strafford's main virtue as a statesman was his honesty, and his determination always to consider the good of the state before the good of himself or any individual.

He was a man of the world and had none of Laud's ecclesiastical fancies and fads for which his enemies could call him a religious persecutor. But his ruthless disregard of anyone who stood in his way when he believed he was pursuing the good of the nation, was enough to raise hatred against him on every side. The conventional historical text-books for long regarded him as the tyrant personified, and the writers of such literature are only echoing the loudest cry of the Puritan leaders of his period. A more scientific and impartial school of historians has now been at work, and put the evidence in proper perspective.

The first charge against Strafford was of tyranny as President of the Council of the North, an office which he received in 1629, the first year of Charles's period of absolute government. It was one of the first of the royal institutions to be pulled down by the Long Parliament, which broke up that autocracy after it met in 1640. A recent historian, Dr. R. R. Reid (in *The Council of the North*) has, for the first time, examined in detail the work of this administrative and judicial body,

and has given a judgment in the following summary: 'Its disappearance indeed permitted a centralisation of justice highly profitable to the judges and lawyers, but productive of many evils. . . . In short, the triumph of the common lawyers established a judicial system which, at least in the north, amounted to an absolute denial of justice to poor men. . . . That disappearance was much to be regretted . . . abundantly proved by the decline in the reputation of English manufacturers after the collapse of Charles I.'s personal government, and by the rise of the various evils connected with poverty and unemployment which called for so much special legislation from 1662 onwards. To the wage-earners and to the poor especially, the disappearance of the Council of the North was pure loss.'

The first charge of inefficiency and tyranny against Charles's system thus appears to fall to the ground with a crash in which the Puritan attackers are more damaged than their opponents. The royal record in the general Privy Council is of a like nature; and Strafford, the prisoner accused of tyranny, again is not discovered in the robes suitable for the part. So long as history was written mainly from the speeches in parliament, then it was fairly easy to make out a good case for the Puritan revolution – because the Puritans made most of the speeches themselves. But it is not wise to give judgment after hearing only the opening speech of the prosecuting counsel; and modern historians have been going more carefully into the evidence. We have seen that Dr. Reid had discovered that the Council of the North was not nearly as bad as Pym and his supporters said it was when they wanted to find an excuse for killing Strafford.

The investigations of Miss E. M. Leonard, published in her *English Poor Relief*, have had a similar effect on the story of the royalist government in the Privy Council. After saying how the Elizabethan royal officers did a great deal in relieving the poor, she goes on: 'But from 1629 to 1640 they acted continually in this direction, and by means of the *Book of Orders*, succeeded, as far as children and the impotent poor were concerned, in securing the due execution of the law. The Council also succeeded in inducing the justices to provide work for the able-bodied poor in many of the districts of the eastern counties, and in some places in almost every county.' She points out that this relief was not merely the careless handing out of doles (as it is to-day) but 'often accompanied by training in a trade.' It is necessary to note the date of this particularly efficient action by Charles's Privy Council; it is 1629 to 1640 – the precise period of his absolute rule. Miss Leonard points out that this most admirable democratic administration of the Tudor and early Stuart despotisms did not survive them: 'After the civil war a part of the system survived . . . never since the days of Charles I. have we had either so much provision of work for the able-bodied or so complete a system of looking after the more needy classes.'

Dr. Gardiner has ascribed the chief credit for all this to Strafford – whom the Puritans executed as their chief enemy. He sums it up thus: 'It can hardly be by accident that his [Strafford's] accession to the Privy Council was followed by a series of measures aiming at the benefit of the people in general, and at the protection of the helpless against

the pressure caused by the self-interest of particular classes.'

It is Strafford's administration in Ireland, during the period of autocratic government, which is still more important in a life of Cromwell, for the latter was to go himself to Ireland and replace the royal system by the Puritan method, and the two can be compared later when we arrive at that period in Cromwell's life. Strafford in Ireland carried his almost ruthless system of 'Thorough' to its last word. In the attempt to settle Connaught, he went beyond the legitimate border-line of despotism, however benevolent may have been his ultimate intentions; for in that case he broke Charles's word of honour, and did grave injustice; and then did not succeed – indeed it was probably this ruthless conduct that made the terrible revolt of the Irish in 1641 inevitable.

But with this grave exception, Strafford's royal 'tyranny' in Ireland was of a nature to make that detested word take a very gentle meaning. It was a tyranny mainly over scoundrels who were making their fortunes out of the people they professed to rule. Immediately on his arrival he summed up the ruling class officials whom he found in possession of the government of Ireland: 'I find them in this place a company of men the most intent upon their own ends that ever I met with, and so as those speed, they consider other things at a very great distance.' The dishonest officials had reason to fear Strafford; he hit at them without mercy and sometimes almost without law. We shall find they had their revenge at his trial and death. But he pushed these inefficient and corrupt officials on one side and

improved the trade of Ireland; increased the revenue; made the army disciplined, paying it by wages instead of by plundering the country; and administered justice: for 'the poor knew where to seek and to have his relief without being afraid to appeal to his Majesty's catholic justice against the greatest subjects.'

Strafford admitted that he had ruled like a despot when he wrote: 'where I found a Crown, a Church and a people spoiled, I could not imagine to redeem them from under the pressure with gracious smiles and gentle looks. It would cost warmer water than so . . . it could not be brought back without strength, nor be forced up hill again but by vigour and force.' It was a defence of 'tyranny' which might have been written by Cromwell himself, who would have been exceedingly like Strafford in his actions – if he had possessed a better brain of constructive power (instead of mainly destructive), and had not been afflicted by a nervous trouble which took the form of religious fanaticism. Strafford was not a despot by nature. It is often forgotten that almost his first act as the king's adviser in 1629, was to persuade Charles to prosecute the distributors of a foolish political pamphlet which advised the king to rule by military force, without a parliament, collecting the revenue by royal command alone. He realised, being an educated man, that parliament was a fundamental part of the national system, and to be used with all respect. But, like Oliver Cromwell, Strafford would never listen patiently to an assembly of politicians who were talking and doing stupid things; although Strafford's impatience never allowed him to turn parliaments

out of their council chambers by force of arms, as we shall find Cromwell doing later on.

On examination, it therefore seems that there was nothing in the autocratic rule of Charles between 1629-1640 which justified the emotional country gentleman of Ely in gathering together an army to drive the king from his throne. Further, since there seemed no connecting link to bring the two men, Charles and Oliver, into violent contact, it is obvious that there must have been another factor in the national position. Civil wars and armed conspiracies on a national scale do not grow by the unaided laws of nature, like trees and wild animals. They need careful planning and continual attention. The great French Revolution of 1789 was not a spontaneous rising of the people against their king and government, but a well-organised conspiracy in which the democracy had very little part indeed – and a still smaller part in the spoils. So likewise with almost every revolution or civil war in history; they have almost always been the work of a small group of men who – generally for selfish and personal motives – have attempted to change the existing government and set up a new one – in which they held the chief offices – in its place. Such are the events which have too often gone down in the historical text-books as the risings and triumphs of democracies.

The rising we are concerned with now, was the one in which Oliver Cromwell was the chief figure; and we have to discover how a small country squire, of very small fame, found himself in such an important position as the chief opponent of the king. There is no evidence that he was the man who took the initial steps. There

is, on the contrary, very good evidence who those persons were.

While Charles was governing by autocratic methods – and, as far as the common people were concerned, governing not at all badly – and Oliver Cromwell was in the country, farming and doing useful service in assisting his neighbours to maintain their ancient rights, another member of the 1620-1629 parliament had also been cut off from a political career by the sudden dismissal of that assembly. John Pym had been a prominent figure in parliament since 1621, a member of the country gentlemen set, who had held good financial posts as receiver of taxes in several counties, and was 'wholly devoted to the Earl of Bedford,' as Clarendon tells us. It is in Pym's life that is to be found the key to the civil war between Charles and the Puritan party. He supplied that active fermenting element without which the quarrels between the Crown and the Parliament would have found a more peaceful solution.

When the parliament of 1629 was dismissed, Pym did not – like Cromwell – return into the country. Being a man of affairs he went into the city of London and became a great person in finance and trade. It was the period in which the English colonies were beginning to be founded, when the nobles and gentry were developing the plans which had been first conceived by the men of the Elizabethan period. Thus it came about that in 1629 the Earl of Warwick, Sir Nathaniel Rich and others, had invested money in an expedition to the Bahamas, in the West Indies: in 1630, the year after the dismissal of parliament had set him free from politics, Pym was appointed treasurer of their company,

CHARLES I., BY DANIEL MYTENS
National Portrait Gallery, London

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and within a few weeks a charter of incorporation had been granted by the Crown, by which these speculators were made 'The Governors and Company of Adventurers for the Plantation of the Islands of Providence, Henrietta and the adjacent islands.' The chief members were the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Holland, the Earl of Essex, Lord Saye and Sele, Lord Brooke, Lord Mandeville, Sir William Waller, Oliver St. John, Sir Nathaniel Rich, and John Pym. John Hampden is said by Mr. Wade to have been also an Adventurer of the Providence Company; but Sir Charles Firth says he was not, though he admits that he was very interested in these colonial schemes, and was one of the twelve men to whom the Earl of Warwick granted a large tract of land in Connecticut in 1631. So Hampden was very definitely a member of the group.

It is a very remarkable collection of the names of almost all the prominent leaders of the Puritan party which led, and indeed created, the opposition to Charles. Until Mr. C. E. Wade wrote his life of Pym, the great importance of this Company in English politics had been overlooked. It is, of course, impossible to consider its history in detail here, yet it gives a most illuminating light on the life of Cromwell, for without the Company of Adventurers he might well have died a farmer instead of Lord Protector. When the crash came with Charles in 1640, it was the members of this Company of Adventurers who were the marked men; and they formed the firmest rallying point for the parliamentary partisans. Pym was their chief inspirer and wire-puller, and Mr. Wade has summed up his position in a very illuminating sentence: 'Not unconscious, not unpre-

pared, not destitute of friends, he was now the centre of a circle knit together by kinship: Saye and Fiennes, Hampden and Cromwell, Holland and Rich, Warwick and Mandeville, Pym and Rous, by common interests and by common hatreds, accustomed to act together, and with agents and friends at the Court, in the City, and in Scotland.'

Pym was now deputy-governor of the Company, and anyone who troubles to examine the evidence will discover a mysterious connection between the action of the leaders of the Puritan party within the Houses of Parliament and the movements of the Adventurers in the city. Which is scarcely astonishing, for they were almost the same men, or their relations. Thus, it was Lord Saye and John Hampden who were the first to take the matter of ship-money before the courts of law. As we watch the struggle between Crown and Parliament growing fiercer and fiercer, we shall find the hand of Pym behind almost every move. Oliver Cromwell for long remained a very minor figure of the scene, and it is only after Pym and his friends had been hard at the work of organisation for some years that the matter was ripe for the soldier to be brought into the field to deliver the decisive blow. Before the nation could be roused to a degree of sufficient interest to take to arms, Pym had to arrange the stage as carefully as an actor-manager sets his play.

Before considering the details of the struggle which was to take an open form when parliament reassembled in 1640 (and so closed the period of Charles I.'s autocratic rule), it is important to understand why the men of this group of Adventurers and their friends were so

persistently in opposition to Charles on almost every point in his policy and action. They were, first and foremost, traders, and therefore interested in avoiding the payment of the custom duties on which Charles so largely relied for his unparliamentary revenue. Then, as the holders of possessions in the West Indies, they had a violent hatred of their chief trading rival, Spain; and it consequently followed that, as trading rivals of Catholic Spain, they were ardent Puritans who would not listen to any religious doctrines which might seem to be going back to Rome. Therefore they hated the queen, who was truly a Roman Catholic, and they also hated Archbishop Laud, who, as they unjustly thought, wanted to become a Catholic if he dared. But there was a more immediate and practical reason why they hated Laud; he was the chief figure in the commission which controlled the English colonies, and the entirely honest Laud was not a comfortable controller for the ambitious and unscrupulous traders of the type of the Adventurers. He was likely, for example, to get suspicious of the ardent desire of the company to send out 'a certain and full supply of ministers,' who were, apparently, to be employed in making the negroes work harder for the profit of the Adventurers. Further, families like the Russells, of whom the Earl of Bedford was the head, lived on ecclesiastical lands that had once belonged to Rome, and they were consequently enthusiastic advocates of any religion which would make it certain that Rome should never come back again with inconvenient claims on old possessions; while such as the Earl of Essex hated Charles and his officials for reclaiming old royal forest lands which he and his

predecessors had enclosed within their own estates. There was scarcely a man among the Adventurers who had not personal reasons for wishing that they could rule England, through a parliament controlled by themselves; they were anxious to take power out of the hands of a king who had no particular respect for the great and the rich, if they stood in the way of the national welfare.

If he had possessed a modest allowance of ordinary tact, Charles had quite a good case to put up for his rule. But that virtue he did not possess; and so it came about that the new ambitious men, the new lords, the new merchants and the new politicians, were able to convince their fellow country-men, or, rather, a sufficient number of them, that Charles's rule was a danger to the liberty and progress of the nation and must be resisted even at the cost of war. Charles Stuart did many foolish things, and he had a head full of utterly preposterous fads and fancies. But all would have been forgiven and forgotten, but for one very important fact – his rule did not suit the plans and interests of the new nobles and the new trading classes that had been the result of the Protestant Revolution.

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUGGLE IN PARLIAMENT

Scotland, like England, had gone over to the side of the Protestant reformers because the nobles and gentry had been given a liberal share of the spoils of the Church lands and offices; and these enriched persons were only too glad to be Presbyterians also, because there was so much more ecclesiastical wealth to go round if there were no bishops to absorb some of it. Charles I., with his audacious disregard for consequences, endeavoured to get back into the hands of the State some of the lands that had been carelessly given to the aristocracy. One could almost admire this attempt; like the charge at the Battle of Balaclava, it was magnificent – but it was certainly very bad political war. For it aroused the Scottish aristocracy, who defended their tithes by setting Jenny Geddes to throw a stool at the head of the Dean of Edinburgh when he first tried to read Laud's Anglican liturgy; then they even leagued with the Covenanters, rose in arms and compelled Charles to sign the treaty of Berwick in 1639.

It was this Scottish attack that compelled Charles to call an English parliament. For his religious convictions and his pride made him determined to break the Scottish resistance; and he had not enough money for a war. Strafford advised him to call a parliament, so the

Short Parliament met at Westminster in April 1640. Cromwell came back to town as the member for the borough of Cambridge. The errors of the king's absolute rule had been sufficiently great to rouse the electors to return representatives who were in favour of the Puritans as against Laud, and supporters of a parliamentary system rather than a royal autocracy. As yet there was nothing approaching serious anger; they were prepared to be reasonable, and would have allowed the king a fair compromise.

Eliot had died in the Tower, undoubtedly a victim of the king's self-will. Pym now took his place as the chief leader of the parliamentary party in the House and the city of London. Instead of granting money to fight the Scots, as the king wished, they discussed their grievances against his government. In spite of Strafford's attempt to get a compromise, his master lost his temper and dissolved parliament after three weeks' sitting. Then Charles tried to carry on his war against the Scots without the help of the Commons, but this was more than the nation would stand. Men would neither fight nor pay, for no one was keen enough about theological squabbles to risk his life and money in these 'Bishops' wars.' While the English army was paralysed for want of supplies, the Scots came over the border under Leslie, and, since there was nobody worth fighting, they settled down in the north of England and demanded £40,000 a month as long as they were kept waiting there. They then said they would take £25,000 a month, for it was a religious war, which – like all others of this sort – had a financial side. But, of course, Charles could not even pay this; and the citizens of

London, the home of the Puritan party, sent him a petition for another parliament.

So the Long Parliament was summoned and met in November 1640. Once more Cromwell was returned for Cambridge town. For the moment he was of very small account, and the national movement in the direction of civil war must, for a short time longer, be described without his personal part being very conspicuous – though, in truth, he was a very representative figure of it all, as already explained. However, if Cromwell as an individual is not very distinctive at first in this Long Parliament, there is the important fact that he was bound by ties of kinship or of marriage with a very large group of the members of this House of Commons. He was cousin to both Hampden and Oliver St. John, two of the most prominent men in the assembly, famous above all for their share in the great law-suit on ship-money, and therefore marked men amongst those who professed to be saving the constitutional liberties of England; and he had three other first cousins in the House, one of them Edmund Waller; including connection by marriage and more distant kinship, there were in all seventeen members of this Long Parliament who were personally linked to Cromwell, and the number was later, by new election, increased to almost two dozen.

It is very striking evidence of how small was the political party which was responsible for this civil war, that was national only in name. Lord Morley has a passage in his *Life of Cromwell*, where he puts down the many ancient names found on the list of the parliament, and then comments: 'These and many another

historic name make the list to-day read like a catalogue of the existing county families . . . it was essentially an aristocratic and not a popular House, as became only too clear five or six years later, when Levellers and Soldiers came into the field of politics. The Long Parliament was made up of the very flower of the English gentry and the educated laity. A modern conservative writer describes as the great enigma, the question how this phalanx of country gentlemen . . . should have been for so long the tool of subtle lawyers and republican theorists, and then have ended by acquiescing in the overthrow of the parliamentary constitution, of which they had proclaimed themselves the defenders.' It is not the first historical mystery which has failed to reveal itself to the sentimental mind of the writers and thinkers who are so ready to take political theorists and adventurers at their own estimation. Undoubtedly, these country gentlemen of England said they were out to save the liberties of Englishmen. On closer inspection, this noble patriotism will not be so obvious to the passer-by.

Cromwell made his first very marked impression in the Commons on November 9th, six days after they met. D'Ewes recorded the event thus: 'Mr. Cromwell delivered the Petition of John Lilburn,' Prynne's late secretary, also a victim of the Star Chamber and then imprisoned in the Fleet. Sir Philip Warwick, who belonged to the king's party, has left us a valuable note thereon: 'The first time I ever took notice of him [Cromwell] was in the beginning of the Parliament held in November 1640, when I vainly thought myself a courtly young gentleman; for we courtiers value our-

selves much on our good clothes. I came into the House one morning, well clad and perceived a gentleman speaking (whom I knew not), very ordinarily apparelled, for it was a plain cloth suit which seemed to have been made by an ill country tailor; his linen was plain and not very clean, and I remember a speck or two of blood upon his little band, which was not much larger than his collar; his hat was without a hatband; his stature was of a good size; his sword stuck close to his side; his countenance swollen and reddish; his voice sharp and untunable, and his eloquence full of fervour. For the subject matter would not hear of much reason, it being on behalf of a servant of Mr. Prynne's, who had dispersed libels against the queen for her dancing and such like innocent and courtly sports; and he aggravated the imprisonment of this man by the Council table unto that height that one would have believed the very government itself had been in great danger by it. I sincerely profess it lessened much my reverence unto that great Council, for he was very much hearkened unto. And yet I lived to see this very gentleman, whom out of no ill-will to him I thus describe, by multiplied good successes, and by real, but usurped power, appear of a great and majestic deportment and comely presence.'

Besides the vivid portrait of the physical man, we have here another reminder of the violent force of Oliver, who 'aggravated' his case until it clearly appeared to Sir Philip as a piece of hysteria beyond the proper limit of rational argument. It was so like Cromwell to be swept away by his passions along this by-path of affairs, while the more level-headed leaders of his party were attending to the greater issues. From the moment the

Long Parliament met it was a race between the Earl of Strafford and John Pym as to which should first get the other into the Tower on a charge of high treason. They had with good reason singled each other out as the real centres of the political battlefield; and as they were both determined men, it was an urgent matter of life or death who should get his blow in first. The earl was begging Charles to accuse Pym of being in league with the Scottish army, by using it as a weapon to crush the king and his English nation. Pym had every intention of charging Strafford with the same crime on the grounds that he was scheming to bring over an army from Ireland, which would crush the parliamentary party in London. Both men were not far wrong in their fears; and, in point of law, it would probably have been easier to prove the case against Pym than against Strafford. In law Strafford, at the worst, was attempting to save the king's government – not to overthrow it, whereas Pym had no such technical answer to the charge.

The trial of Strafford is not part of the immediate subject of this book, for Cromwell was as yet only an obedient vote given as his leaders directed. Still, he was a member of the House that condemned Strafford to death after a trial which had little law in it and much unscrupulous intrigue. As Lord Morley sums up: 'The evidence, on any rational interpretation of the facts, was defective at almost every point.' But there was worse than a poor case behind the parliamentarians' charge against Strafford. When it is examined carefully it will be seen that it was mainly supported by witnesses from Ireland, who were seizing the opportunity to revenge

themselves against the man who had stopped their corrupt attempts to make money illegally in the course of their official employment. There were unscrupulous peers, like the Earl of Cork and Lord Mountnorris, who hated Strafford because he governed honestly, and therefore would not tolerate their dishonesty.

It was now open war. Since Pym and his party could not convince their fellow-countrymen that Strafford was in the wrong and a tyrant, it was necessary to make an end of argument, and cut off the head of the man they could not otherwise silence. It is a deed which very intimately concerns the life of Cromwell, though he did not take much part in planning that first serious act of physical violence of the civil war. For when he registered his vote for Strafford's beheading, he was learning the lesson that he was in a few years himself to put into practice when he cut off the head of Charles. He was, in short, learning (wrongly, of course) that force is more effective in this world's affairs than argument. He had heard the words of Oliver St. John, his cousin, when he was arguing for the attainder of Strafford, instead of trying him by law: 'it was never accounted either cruelty or foul play to knock foxes and wolves on the head as they can be found, because they be beasts of prey.' It was a coarse doctrine, which suited the Puritan faith of the Semitic Old Testament, which was Cromwell's chief text-book of life.

Being a man of a certain shrewd worldly sense – and he had the more room for such simple common sense, inasmuch as he had very little subtle thought – Cromwell must have learned another important lesson in public life during this trial of Strafford. He could not

have been unaware that a large part of the supposed outcry against the prisoner was carefully contrived by Pym and his city friends, and stage-managed as a play is mounted by a manager for his theatre. A howling mob came from the city to Westminster, to coerce the parliament and make Strafford's death a certainty, as the Earl of Essex had desired when Hyde had argued for mercy. 'Stone dead hath no fellow' was the cold reply of Cromwell's first military chief. It was not a street mob, but a collection of very staid merchants and shopkeepers who – there is every reason to believe – were Pym's city .friends. On all sides Cromwell was being taught that force and crafty intrigue were the only sure methods for political success.

While Strafford was under arrest, awaiting his trial, the smaller men – without power to use force – were compelled to apply milder methods. On December 30th, 1640, Cromwell moved the second reading of a bill which proposed to make annual parliaments a compulsory part of constitutional law, which (in a committee, of which Cromwell was a member) ultimately became a bill for a parliament every three years. But the Cromwell of this period, being not yet allowed to lead an army, was mostly interested in religious coercion – or, as he called it, religious liberty. He therefore, on February 9th, 1641, gave his support to a petition of the Londoners asking for the abolition of episcopacy. The parliamentarian party had just arrested Archbishop Laud, but they were not strong enough to cut off his head at once, so, for the moment, it seemed necessary to take more constitutional steps. Cromwell's simple mind, at this time, appeared to

believe that if only there were no bishops or cavaliers in England everything would go well. He was later to learn the sad fact that, when he had got rid of a large part of them, and was ruler of England himself, there were still several inconvenient evils left in the land.

It was on the occasion of this episcopacy debate that Cromwell was roused to protest against a Sir John Strangeways, who said that equality in the Church was a blunder; for if they did away with the rank of bishops, they would next be asked to do away with secular rulers. Whereupon Cromwell got up and made himself (as usual) so violent in his criticism that there were cries: 'To the bar,' which was a demand for a withdrawal and apology. But the powerful Pym, and also Denzil Holles, came to his help, and the irritated members allowed him to continue his remarks, which did not amount to much so far as they have survived in the report: 'Mr. Cromwell went on and said: He did not understand why that gentleman that last spoke should make an inference of parity from the Church to the State, nor that there was any necessity of the great revenues of bishops. He was more convinced touching the irregularity of bishops than ever before, because like the Roman hierarchy they would not endure to have their condition come to a trial.' It was not a very great effort either of eloquence or political philosophy; though, coming from the farmer of the Ely tithes, it had an unconscious humour that was very characteristic of this slow-thinking rustic gentleman, who probably never for one moment realised how his religion and political creeds were so closely bound up with the financial interests of his illustrious family.

By terrorising the House of Parliament by the organisation of armed mobs from the city, Pym and his friends had forced through the bill of attainder against Strafford. On May 12th he was beheaded; and the Puritan autocrats had, for the moment, crushed the more beneficent autocracy of the royalists. The great historian, Gardiner, has summed up the character of Strafford in a few sentences, which are a fitting epitaph for his tomb: ' "Justice without respect of persons" might have been the motto of his life. Nothing called forth his bitter indignation like the claims of the rich to special consideration or favour. The rule of the House of Commons meant for him – not altogether without truth – the rule of the landlord and the lawyer at the expense of the poor.' The Commons had taken their revenge; the Puritan 'democrats' had won their first great victory – and the pages of history must ripple with ironic mirth.

The history of party politics thus began in England, in its first definite shape, with physical violence; and the Puritan leaders began to entrench themselves in power. The whole civil war of this period was the method by which one party gained the spoils of office from the other party. Their method was by ordeal of battle and the executioner's axe – whereas to-day the same results are obtained by the milder ways of rhetoric, and, still more, by careful organisation in the offices of the party councils. The Puritans had one substantial excuse for their violence: Strafford had taught them this dangerous political doctrine when he wrote: 'In an extreme necessity you may do all that your power admits. Parliament refusing [he was advising his king]

you are acquitted towards God and man. You have an army in Ireland you may employ here to reduce this kingdom. One summer well employed will do it.' There has never been much difference in the ultimate policy of the opposing political partisans at any period of history. We shall see that Cromwell was the legitimate successor of Strafford – whose head he had voted to cut off for daring to advocate the use of that force which became Oliver's own chief weapon.

Strafford was thus released from further unscrupulous party intrigues on May 12th, 1641; his triumphant opponents were free to reap their reward; and, as at the time of the Tudor Reformation, the most likely place for spoils was in the Church. Away back on December 11th, 1640, an Alderman Pennington had presented a petition from 15,000 inhabitants of London, who prayed the Commons to abolish the rule of all the Church officials from archbishops down to archdeacons, in such a drastic manner that 'all its dependencies, roots and branches may be abolished, and all laws in their behalf made void.' The petitioners expressed their anxious horror lest the clergy should fail in preaching the true faith from fear of their ecclesiastical superiors; and in particular they were worried that the people would not hear 'the doctrines of Predestination, of Free Grace, or Perseverance, of Original Sin remaining after Baptism, of the Sabbath, the doctrine against Universal Grace, the Election for Faith foreseen, Free Will against Anti-Christ, Non-Residents, human inventions in God's worship, all which are generally withheld from the people's knowledge because not relishing to the Bishops.' It appeared, according to this petition, that

it was all the fault of the bishops that there was such a 'swarming of luxurious, idle and unprofitable books and pamphlets, play books and ballads, the frequent vending of crucifixes and Popish pictures . . . praying towards the East, bowing at the name of Jesus, kneeling at the communion' and other superstitious practices; which terrible matters would never have happened if Englishmen had only had the sense, when they got rid of the Pope, to have 'cast out the prelates also as members of the Beast.'

Here was theological fervour after Oliver Cromwell's own heart, and Hampden and Pym and St. John all saw that there was profitable political substance in this arousing of the fires of religious fanaticism. Pym for the moment had his hands full of worldly finance, having to find money for his friends the Scottish soldiers, who were still encamped in the north of England; and he so completely forgot that he was the leader of a party which objected to the king raising illegal taxes, that he, Pym, calmly proposed that they should force the citizens of London to lend the money as a forced loan. So apt is one party to adopt the methods of its defeated rival.

But Cromwell had not got a head for finance or anything that required prolonged thought, so he still kept himself to the more emotional matter of religion. A more timid bill had already proposed to forbid bishops touching secular affairs, but the lords had decided to keep the bishops in their House. This was enough to rouse Cromwell's passions and fanaticism. On May 27th he and the younger Vane brought to the House the Root and Branch Bill, which was to finish with the bishops for good and all. They did not feel able to do

justice to this bill by introducing it themselves; and indeed they had not drafted the bill – that, it is supposed, having been done by Oliver St. John, his cousin, the Solicitor-General. A somewhat strange manner of proceeding then followed in the Commons. Clarendon tells us that 'they prevailed with Sir Edward Dering, a man very opposite to all their designs (but a man of levity and vanity easily flattered by being commended), who presented it to the House from the gallery, with two verses in Ovid.' This amiable gentleman loved to make himself conspicuous on all occasions, and had no particular fads about the principles involved, so long as he could tell his wife with pride in his next letter that the crowd had cried in democratic enthusiasm: 'There goes Sir Edward Dering.' On this occasion he was quickly informed by another member of the House that he was out of all order in introducing this bill as he had done it; and Clarendon continues the story by recording that 'The gentleman who brought it in made many excuses "of his ignorance in the customs of parliament, having never before served in any,"' and acknowledged 'that he had never read more than the title of the bill, and was prevailed with by the member who sat next to him (Sir Arthur Haslerig) to deliver it.'

The incident is instructive; for it is clear that this was a very smart piece of political work on Cromwell's part, unless he was only the tool of his abler political friends. Dering was not an extremist; and it was a considerable score to trick him into introducing a bill which did as much as most single events to make the struggle between the moderate and violent men beyond compromise, and therefore made war inevitable.

Cromwell had been appointed to over eighteen committees of the House of Commons in the first session of the Long Parliament; and he was learning the tricks of his trade as a professional politician. There is a great deal of evidence, which will appear later, that he was quite capable of crafty deception and intrigue which would be more natural in the case of a less divinely inspired man.

Having introduced his Root and Branch Bill, Cromwell pressed on a Bill for the Abolishing of Superstition and Idolatry. Then he was put on another committee to devise plans for appointing preachers. Next he brought in a resolution 'to take some course to turn Papists out of Dublin'; and another that 'sermons should be in the afternoon in all parishes in England.' In short, Cromwell was fiercely burning with the fire of Puritan theology.

The parliamentary party was now well in the saddle of power; and it proceeded to sweep away all the institutions which had helped Charles to govern during his period of absolute rule. The Star Chamber, the Council of the North, and the Council of Wales were all abolished by a statute to which Charles could not refuse his consent. It is a most important fact to note that it was Edward Hyde (the Lord Clarendon of later day, and the future chief adviser of Charles I. and then of his son, Charles II.) who was one of the warmest promoters of this bill. There was, as yet, no royalist party worth the name. In other words, had the control of affairs been left in the hands of gentlemen of honour like Hyde, who thought first of their country as a whole before they worried about their personal interests and

their private fads, then Charles would have been so isolated that he would have been compelled to yield, with grace or without it. There would have been no disastrous civil war to reduce the land to misery. But it happened otherwise; for Pym and Cromwell and their friends were full of egoism, fanaticism, and worse – and England had to go through an unwilling war before it was proved that the extremists were not reformers, but only destroyers who did not know how to rebuild when they had pulled down.

Brief reasons have already been given for the suggestion that the destruction of the Star Chamber and other royal Courts was not the democratic, liberty-bringing reform that it might appear on the surface. These courts, in the main, were careful of the poor men who came before them and handed out stern justice to the rich men – who naturally clamoured for their abolition. The new acts, passed to prohibit any taxation without consent of parliament (that is ship-money and tonnage and poundage) were sounder measures of reform, though the rich men who were leading the parliamentary party took care to pass another act which said that the king must not reclaim any old royal forest lands which they had managed to slip quietly within their own fences.

For all these measures of civil reform Cromwell had his responsibility as a member of the parliament that passed them. But he himself was still mainly wrapped up in his mystical belief that the chief thing that was wrong with England was that it was not yet a member of his own small religious sect. He managed to get his Root and Branch Bill, abolishing the bishops, through its second reading by one hundred and thirty-nine votes

to one hundred and eight; but well-balanced men were either against the measure or indifferent, and there the bill stopped. However, it had done its work; it had driven the sane, moderate men out of the parliamentary party, and left the unbalanced men in control of the Puritan Revolution. But there was almost unanimous agreement that the Court of High Commission, Laud's chief instrument of religious coercion, should go, and an act to that effect passed easily.

The reaction against the reformers was already showing itself. Englishmen, strangely enough, hated the Scottish army that had saved their liberty – so they were told; but perhaps every man dislikes an invading army in occupation. Again, this parliament of reformers was taxing the country more heavily than the autocratic Charles had ever taxed it, and most men prefer to be unreformed and pay less. Finally, the country as a whole was already tired of a harsh Puritan discipline which was only a convenient weapon to throw against bishops who had said hasty and ridiculous things about the divine right of kings. The vast majority of people worried no more about divine right than about predestination or original sin. The struggle between Puritanism and Episcopalianism was a matter of indifference to nine men out of ten.

But with Cromwell it was the great thing that mattered, and in September he was found supporting a resolution to persuade the House of Commons to alter the Prayer Book, because, he said, 'grave and learned divines' could not agree with it all as it stood. But even the House of parliamentarians – there were only ninety-two members who had troubled to attend the discussion—

could not agree with him, and the motion was defeated. A beautiful piece of literature is harder to overthrow than a lawyer's constitution. Professor Gardiner writes of this resolution: 'The attack upon the Prayer Book by the unnamed member was the commencement of the civil war. There was now a possibility that Charles might find a party not only in parliament but in the nation.' The statement by such an authority is of the utmost importance, for it is evidence – almost proof – that the civil war was not made by the majority of Englishmen, who were worried about the constitutional liberty of their nation, but rather by much smaller sects, who were intent on imposing their personal religious dogmas on their neighbours.

This is one reason why Oliver Cromwell was the great central figure of the civil war. He was one of the fanatics who were determined to make their religious dogmas the chief issue of the struggle. Passing over a resolution moved by him in October, concerning the bishops – the ever-haunting ghosts of his hot imagination – he then did the most significant act of his life. On November 6th, 1641, he moved a resolution that Lord Essex should be appointed by the House of Commons to command all the trained bands of the southern half of England, in order that they might prepare for the defence of the country. In other words, this Puritan enthusiast, who had so far confined himself almost exclusively to the pushing forward of his peculiar religious doctrines, suddenly took the radical step of his life, and made it clear that he proposed to support his creed, if necessary, by force of arms. Here begins the career of Oliver Cromwell as the Puritan soldier;

we shall see that the soldier becomes day by day more obvious; and, on still closer inspection, it will appear that the religious man is ever more and more submerged – though not altogether – in the man of the battlefield and other very worldly affairs. He did not possess a big mind, and like many other limited intellects, he could not think of any better solution than the simple primitive one of force.

At this moment it seemed that the king was growing weaker, and the opponents of his extreme autocracy included almost the whole of the intelligent leaders of both Houses of Parliament. Even the men who were afterwards in the royalist ranks were at this time as keen defenders of parliamentary privileges as the Puritan leaders themselves. It seemed the moment for waiting patiently just a little longer, when Charles's case must utterly collapse in its autocratic form, whereupon the nation would take its next national step in political evolution. The reform would then have come by natural growth, without a violent upheaval.

But it was not to be thus. At this critical moment John Pym pressed forward the Grand Remonstrance in the House two days after Cromwell's resolution on the command of the citizen army, or trained bands. The peculiar sting of that resolution had been that it more or less directly asserted that it was in the power of parliament to grant that command, and not the privilege of the king. It was, therefore, the assertion of parliamentary supremacy on a very vital matter. It was a crude challenge to Charles of that abrupt kind that could only give him an opportunity to put an end to compromise and start war. Mr. Frederic Harrison,

in his *Life of Cromwell*, says that the resolution 'is the first suggestion of a Parliamentary army,' and he adds that Cromwell's 'vehemence led the Commons to take up the Grand Remonstrance, which was virtually a summons to the nation to action.' But this is to ignore the undeniable fact that at this moment Pym was the controller and chief wire-puller of the parliamentary party. Cromwell was still comparatively unknown, Pym was the man who had been working up towards the complete supremacy of parliament, with himself in command. Public opinion was – as usual – not far from the truth when it baptised him as 'King Pym.' The Grand Remonstrance, or 'Declaration of the State of the Kingdom,' was his battle-cry or his election address; an appeal to the nation to support him and his fellow-parliamentarians in their determination to make the House of Commons supreme in the state; with themselves the chosen chief ministers, as a happy thought not far behind in the background of their minds.

There may have been nothing very objectionable in the two hundred and eleven clauses of the Grand Remonstrance; there may even have been much that was admirable, except that ill-concealed religious fanaticism, which showed itself in everything that came from Puritan sources. But it was meant as a war-cry rather than an argument for debate. It was not put down for formal discussion in the House until November 8th, 1641; which, as we have seen, was two days after Cromwell had moved the resolution concerning the collecting of an army. Yet, nevertheless, it was Pym and his small group of politicians who had, by long years of careful manipulation of the public mind and

the political machinery, brought things to such a pass that it was possible for Cromwell to take this action. Without Pym and his scheming political fellows, Charles and Cromwell would never have met face to face in the field of battle. The civil war was fought by soldiers, but it was planned by civilians of the political trade. From now onwards, Cromwell rose rapidly to the head of affairs. He had found his true place as a leader of the physical-force men, that had no patience to argue with their opponents. It was quicker, they thought, to crush them.

The scene in the House of Commons when the Grand Remonstrance was carried, came very near to war itself. The Remonstrance – like most political literature – was meant to be exasperating. The more one reads Clarendon, the more just he appears in his judgments, and the more balanced his statements. Here is his summing-up of the Remonstrance: 'It contained a very bitter representation of all the illegal things which had been done from the first hour of the king's coming to the crown to that minute [note, he admits the illegality] with all those sharp reflections which could be made, upon the king himself, the queen, and council; and published all the unreasonable jealousies of the present government; of the introducing popery; and all other particulars; which might disturb the minds of the people; which were enough discomposed.'

Then Clarendon goes on to describe an incident which, almost unconsciously, reveals the petulant intolerance of Cromwell's mind. Although the House clearly showed that the Remonstrance was not the general desire of its members, and there was a refusal

to have it rushed through without debate: 'Oliver Cromwell (who at that time was little taken notice of) asked the lord Falkland "Why he would have it put off, for that day would quickly have determined it?" He answered, "There would not have been time enough, for sure it would take some debate." The other replied "A very sorry one," they supposing by the computation they had made, that very few would oppose it. But he quickly found he was mistaken.'

The Pym and Cromwell party got their Remonstrance through by a hundred and fifty-nine votes to a hundred and forty-eight. It was thus eleven men who pushed England over the edge of reason into the chaos of war, which is the end of reason. Immediately the result of the division was announced, some members declared their desire to record their protest against this document, but Clarendon (Hyde, as he was then) and another were told that they could not thus record their private opinion as against the resolution of the majority. They bowed to the decision; but another member pressed his right to have an entry made in the Journals of the House that he and others had protested against the Grand Remonstrance. The opposing parties took sides with enthusiasm, and hats were waved. More ominously, men began to handle the scabbards of their swords, which were within an ace of being drawn; and then the civil war would have started – where it was planned – in Westminster, and not with the raising of the king's standard at Nottingham next year. But the anger was soothed by the coolness of John Hampden, and the sitting broke up at four in the morning.

'As they went out of the House,' Clarendon records

'the lord Falkland asked Oliver Cromwell whether there had been a debate, to which he answered, "that he would take his word another time"; and whispered him in the ear with some asseveration, "that if the Remonstrance had been rejected he would have sold all he had the next morning, and never have seen England more, and he knew there were many other honest men of the same resolution." '

Then Clarendon adds a sentence of dry comment which showed that one man at least had judged correctly of Oliver Cromwell's influence and part in the great civil war: 'So near was the poor kingdom at that time to its deliverance.' It was the soundest of judgments. If Cromwell had left England his country would have been saved eighteen or so years of war and military rule and their long-lived evil consequences. He was, perhaps, the one man who could have kept this useless struggle alive for so many years – because no one else combined so much stubborn fanaticism with so much military skill; and by means of these two doubtful virtues the history of England was interrupted by a useless civil war, which reformed nothing.

Almost the first deed done by the party of liberty after this narrow triumph of the Grand Remonstrance, was to send to the Tower Geoffrey Palmer, the member who had claimed the right to record in the Journals of the House that he did not agree with the bare majority who had voted for it. The party of liberty does not appear to have realised the delicate irony of the situation. But reformers are generally so earnest in their mission that they have no time to consider the acid humours of their trade.

There was one great fact which had a wide influence on Cromwell's life, and also gave the parliamentary party a powerful weapon, if not also an excuse, for its militant action at this time. A terrible insurrection had broken out in Ireland in October 1641. Its causes were far back in the history of the English government, or rather misgovernment, of that restless people. A shamefully unjust treatment of the Irish people by their English conquerors (perhaps combined with the natural incapacity of the Celtic race to make that rational compromise which is an essential in all social progress) had resulted in a mad outburst of a nation which had been persecuted beyond the possibility of further calm thought. To the ordinary contemporary political observer it seemed to be a struggle of the Protestant Saxon against the Roman Catholic Celt. It therefore seemed a very startling confirmation of the Puritan case that the Catholics were their worst enemy. The parliamentarians were in the dilemma of being necessarily compelled to raise an army which would crush the rebellion, and yet feared to entrust Charles with its command, lest he should use it against themselves in England, as well as against their common foes in Ireland.

It was this fact which made the question of the control of the army the immediate cause of the outbreak of the civil war, and gave Cromwell his chance. On November 1st, 1641, the terrible news of the Irish rebellion was read to the English parliament; on November 6th, as we have seen, Cromwell moved his resolution to put the English militia under the control of parliament instead of allowing the king to command

it through the lords-lieutenant of the counties, as had been the former practice of the English constitution. From that time events moved rapidly to open war; for the extremists on both sides were now facing each other, and the quieter, reasonable men, as is usual in public life, had been pushed on one side.

A few days after the passing of the Grand Remonstrance Charles came back to London. There was still ample evidences of the possibility of a compromise, if the normal citizens had had their way; for the king was entertained at the Guildhall of the city of London with exuberant demonstrations of loyalty. But the politicians had gone too far to trust a popular king; and the House of Commons replied by organised mobs of street demonstrators, who rushed to Westminster, shouting: 'No bishops.' That it was an organised and not a spontaneous popular outburst, was proved by the innocency of the rioters, who declared that 'the parliament men sent for them.' Pym and his colleagues of the Company of Adventurers had organised this 'revolution,' as any impartial reader will agree if he takes the trouble to read the evidence collected by Mr. Wade in his *Life of Pym*.

But, for the moment, we are concerned with Cromwell. On December 4th, 1641, the English parliament declared a religious war against the papist rebels in Ireland, and vowed to confiscate more of their land as pledge for any loans that were offered to maintain an army to crush the rebels. Cromwell, 'who knew nothing of Irish history' (as Sir Charles Firth explains, with ironical contempt, when recording the fact) invested £500, 'about one year's income,' adds this historian;

continuing: 'He shared the general ignorance of his contemporaries about the causes of the rebellion and believed the prevalent exaggerations about the massacre.' To subscribe a year's income in an enthusiastic attempt to make a war to kill papists was so typical of Cromwell.

On December 7th, Sir Arthur Haselrig ('brother-in-law to the lord Brooke, and an absurd bold man, brought up by Mr. Pym, and so employed by that party to make any attempt,' as Clarendon estimated him at the time of the attainder of Strafford), the same man who had been artfully persuaded by Cromwell, as we have seen, to pass on the Root and Branch Bishops' Bill to Sir Edward Dering, now again appears with a Militia Bill. It was probably drafted by Oliver St. John, Cromwell's cousin, and put Cromwell's previous military resolution into fuller legal form. The bill proposed to give the armed forces of the nation into the hands of parliament instead of the Crown. The Commons, mainly representative, as they were, of the class of Englishmen who had estates in Ireland (as settlers on confiscated lands), had already passed a conscription bill to compel Englishmen to fight in Ireland to recover these same estates now threatened by the rebellion. The Militia Bill was the final struggle between two parties who had made up their minds to fight out their quarrel without compromise; for the bill meant the winning or losing of the war, if it came.

It was now a progress on both sides from verbal violence to physical violence, which grew daily more unrestrained. The mob partisans of the streets came nearer the striking point; and at this time the epithets of 'Roundhead' and 'Cavalier' were first shouted as

terms of abuse, which became permanent party names. A group in the City – having all the symptoms of Pym behind it – began petitioning for the removal of the bishops and Catholic lords from their places in the House of Lords. But the soberer magnates were not yet inflated with religious blood-lust; and the Recorder protested that the petition did not help towards a peaceful settlement as the petitioners professed: 'No!' he exclaimed, 'it is for blood and cutting of throats; and if it comes to cutting of throats, thank yourselves, and your blood be upon your own hands.'

Each side was now so desperate that it was ready to believe anything of its opponents. The parliamentarians said the king was preparing to seize and execute their leaders; the royalists said that Pym was on the point of impeaching the queen for treason. There was, perhaps, a good deal of truth in both fears. Charles, with mad folly, appointed Lunsford, a known 'debauched ruffian,' as Lieutenant of the Tower of London. The Lord Mayor of London told Charles flatly that the City would rise in rebellion unless he removed Lunsford. Charles gave way and appointed a most honourable man in his place, for the king often did the right thing unless he were bullied into folly.

The mobs round the Houses grew worse. Then Cromwell – under a sudden emotion, as the circumstances seem clearly to denote – moved a resolution in the Commons that Lord Bristol should be restrained from acting as the adviser of the king; giving as his reason that Bristol, many months before, had advised Charles to bring the northern army to crush the parliamentary party. Professor Gardiner makes the crushing judg-

ment: 'Again we find Cromwell full of vague impulses, thinking in terms of force instead of intellect. As he had the impulse to violence himself, he could impute no other intention to his opponents.' A few days later twelve of the bishops protested that the Puritan mob would not allow them to go to the House of Lords without peril to their lives. It was perfectly true. Yet the Commons immediately replied by impeaching the bishops for high treason, and ten of them were sent to the Tower. This was on December 30th, 1641.

Almost at this moment certain news came to Charles that the parliamentary leaders had finally determined to impeach the queen. Charles replied with a rapidity which did credit to the husband, however defective it might be in the statesman. The impeachment of five parliamentary leaders of the Commons was brought forward in the House of Lords. The Commons replied curtly by sending to the City for an armed guard; thus preparing to resist arrest. Charles hesitated; but the queen, after the manner of the queens who have so often turned vague political controversy into certain revolution – there was Queen Margaret, who made the barons' Wars of the Roses so violent; and Marie Antoinette, who was to make the French Revolution a certainty – taunted him: 'Go, you coward, and pull these rogues out by the ears, or never see my face more.' So Charles went.

That very unsavoury figure of sensational fiction – that was true in this case – Lucy, Countess of Carlisle, the Queen's false lady-in-waiting, sent a messenger running to her friend Pym with the news. The scandal of the day said she was his mistress, as she had been

the mistress before of his enemy, Strafford. The most acid of the tongues said that it was because of rivalry for this common prize that Pym had sent Strafford to his death. It is a dark story, but then the Lady Carlisle had a dark, mysterious nature – which, however, is too long a tale for this volume.

Then followed one of the most famous scenes in English parliamentary history, when the king, leaving some four hundred armed followers waiting outside, strode into the House of Commons to arrest Pym and the four other members. The list did not include Cromwell, who, in spite of all his actions was not yet considered in the front rank of the revolutionary leaders. So he was a silent spectator of the drama – and learned his lesson for future use. Warned by Lady Carlisle's messenger, Pym and the other four had taken refuge in the City. When Charles asked the Speaker to tell him where the accused men were, Lenthall made the only great speech of his somewhat sordid career: 'I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak, in this place but as this House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am.' If that was a spontaneous utterance, it was one of the most brilliantly phrased sentences, both of constitutional law and parliamentary eloquence. So Charles withdrew, a beaten man. It was within an ace of a massacre that day, for the king's followers were ready for desperate mischief, if all they muttered was meant seriously.

On this 4th day of January 1642 thus took place the first armed reconnaissance of the civil war. Cromwell, who had a better eye for a battlefield than anyone in the House, knew well what it meant; and ten days later, on January 14th, he brought a resolution before the

Commons asking that the kingdom should be armed in defence against the supposed papist enemies who were (if Pym and his friends told the truth) getting together for a great rising against the Protestants, as they had just risen in Ireland. There was certainly something very near a plot by the hottest royalists, to get rid of the small minority of the extreme Puritans, who were pushing the nation into a needless struggle which might still be arranged by a useful compromise. The popish plot was sheer fiction. But it was very necessary to talk about it, for without it men of the type of Cromwell might never have 'seen red'; and without the eyes of distorted fanaticism there would have been no civil war, and the political adventurers and fanatics who made it would have had no chance of rising to power and the spoils of office. Earnest, sincere men, like Cromwell, had to be pricked into action by battle-cries and propaganda lies which are necessary to start most wars.

The day for the talkers had now passed; the moment for action had come – and Cromwell, therefore, stepped to the front of the stage of history. War being now a certainty it was merely a matter of preparing for it. On February 7th the Journal of the Commons records: 'Mr. Cromwell offers to lend three hundred Pounds for the service of the Commonwealth.' Two months later he increased this to £500. His cousin, John Hampden, gave £1000, and already four or five thousand of his neighbouring gentry and freeholders in Buckinghamshire had marched to London to say that they also wanted what the politicians demanded.

Then Cromwell in the Commons, 'moved that we might make an order to allow the Townsmen of

Cambridge to raise two Companies of Volunteers, and to appoint Captains over them.' On the same day (July 15th, 1642) there is a parliamentary record: 'Whereas Mr. Cromwell hath sent down arms into the County of Cambridge, for the defence of that County,' he was to receive £100 in repayment for the money he had spent; and there is in existence his receipt for the money, four days later. On August 15th it is reported that 'Mr. Cromwell in Cambridge has seized the magazine in the Castle at Cambridge, and hath hindered the carrying of the Plate from that University; which, as some report, was to the value of £20,000 or thereabouts.'

Cromwell was now in his element; raising soldiers and doing things by physical force. It was much more in his line of life to carry off the plate at Cambridge than to make a philosophical defence for such a deed in the House of Commons. A revolution only begins when people have reached the end of profitable argument. The king's friends and the parliament's friends were doing much the same as Cromwell over a considerable part of the country.

When it is noted that the king had agreed to the drastic bill excluding the bishops from the House of Lords, as far back as February 13th, it rouses more than suspicion that although there was much talk about the religious differences in dispute, yet they were not the real issue at all. For in spite of this concession, there did not seem any abatement of the ardour of Cromwell and Pym. There is a remarkable record that Hampden was one day asked by a friend whether it would not be better to say rather less about religion, and Hampden replied that 'if it were not for this re-iterated cry about

religion they would never be certain of keeping the people on their side.' Which is a considerable admission that Hampden, at least, knew that the alarmist report about the papist conspiracy was mainly the convenient tactics of politicians.

Still, it would not be fair to assert that Cromwell had discovered this hypocrisy or smart tactics, so named according to the taste of the critic. He was never a profound philosopher, and, especially at this moment, he was far too busy to think. Mrs. Lomas gives an illuminating footnote to Carlyle's account of Cromwell's doings at Cambridge, recorded above. A news-letter describes how he did his work. The university authorities and the Bishop of Ely were doing what they could to collect an army, according to the king's command, when Cromwell appeared on the scene 'in a terrible manner, with what force he could draw together, and surrounds divers colleges while we were at our devotions in our several chapels, taking away several doctors of divinity, heads of colleges . . . and these he carries with him to London in triumph.'

The tremendous, rushing determination of this man is clear from the very first days of his part in the civil war. There is another record of his early energy, mentioned by Sir John Bramston in his autobiography. He was held up between Huntingdon and Cambridge by Cromwell's musketeers, who suddenly started up from a cornfield; and 'commanded us to stand, telling us we must be searched, and to that end must go before Mr. Cromwell. . . . I asked where Mr. Cromwell was? A soldier told us he was four miles off . . . putting my hand in my pocket I gave one of them

twelve-pence, who said we might pass.' The thoughtful will wonder how many of Cromwell's soldiers could have been squared by twelve copper coins, and whether, indeed, the whole civil war might not have been quietly cancelled on much the same terms, if only Mr. Cromwell could have been kept four miles away from all plain, sensible men. Not many sober persons, who have read history, would value the worth of a civil war at much above the shilling that was this musketeer's estimate.

But wars are not arranged by plain men, but by Cromwells and Committees of Safety; one of which the parliamentarians appointed on July 4th, 1642 – thereby making it inevitable that England would be entirely unsafe for eighteen years. It was the safety of their own heads that was mainly threatened, they having committed so many acts of high treason in the last few months as to make their future exceedingly unsafe, unless they utterly crushed the king. Two days later they ordered an army of 10,000 to be gathered, and, on July 9th, made the Earl of Essex their commander-in-chief. With not undue haste Charles replied by raising his standard at Nottingham on August 22nd, 1642. The civil war between Royalists and Puritans had now formally begun; and the subject of this volume entered upon the great period of his career, somewhat modestly as 'Captain Oliver Cromwell, captain of a troop of eighty harquebuisers,' in the army of the Earl of Essex, with the Earl of Bedford as General of the Horse. We have already had occasion, in earlier pages, to note the economic adventures of both these parliamentary leaders concerning common lands and national forests.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST CIVIL WAR

The first difficulty that faced Cromwell and the small group of friends who determined to fight Charles for the right to rule England, was to persuade Englishmen to take that serious interest in the quarrel that alone compels a man to undergo the discomforts and even fatal inconveniences of war. So we find him continually writing urgent letters begging people to be more zealous in sending money and men: thus, in March 1643, he sends a warrant to the inhabitants of Fen Drayton: 'Having in part seen your affections to the cause [there is pathetic humour in the 'in part'], we are encouraged as well as necessitated to desire a free will offering of a liberal contribution from you, for the better attaining of our desired ends.' Two days later Cromwell writes to another district: 'I am sorry I should so often trouble you about the business of money . . . but such is Captain Nelson's occasion that he hath not wherewith to satisfy for the billet of his soldiers.' And in a few more days he tells the Mayor of Colchester that he has appointed as 'captain' an honest, religious, valiant gentleman, Captain Dodsworth to train a company, but 'he hath been unhappy beyond others in not receiving any pay for himself, and what he had for his soldiers is out long ago. . . . I beseech you therefore consider this gentleman and the soldiers.' There was evidently

no tremendous national enthusiasm to assist Cromwell in saving the liberty of England.

Fortunately for the parliamentarians, Charles was in the same difficulty. The man who had the honour of carrying the Royal Standard, Sir Edmund Verney, wished himself out of the war before it began. As he told Clarendon: 'for my part, I do not like to quarrel, and do heartily wish that the king would yield and consent to what they desire. . . . I have no reverence for bishops, for whom this quarrel subsists.' Such men as Falkland and his closer friends were on the king's side for all sorts of reasons, except that they thought he was right. Falkland was too polished to care for either a royal despot or a disloyal fanatic; and too cultured to regard the logic of bishops as very convincing. As Professor Marriott puts it: 'His one fault was that his soul was too large and his vision too clear for the pettiness and bigotries by which he was surrounded.' It would be hard to sum up better the disagreeable position of every sensitive mind when it found itself between the fire of Cromwell and Charles.

Then there was Edmund Waller, that most typical of the adventurers who hung round the political classes. 'Rich, witty, licentious,' wrote Dr. Gardiner, 'he regarded war and Puritanism with equal aversion . . . when the war broke out he merely sought to make the best of an awkward situation.' It does not sound heroic – but on careful examination, there does not seem to have been any more obvious way for the sane man.

It is still more instructive to consider the men, on

both sides, who did show a certain kind of energy which it was clearly unreasonable to expect from the Falklands and Verneys and Wallers, and the mayors whom Cromwell tried to incite into action. In a letter of May 1643 (and in another two years later on) Cromwell writes of military operations he is carrying out in co-operation with Sir John Gell. It so happens that in the *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson* there is some very interesting information about this Puritan gentleman who fought by Cromwell's side, written by a contemporary, who was an ardent supporter of the parliamentary cause. Here are a few touches from the portrait of Gell. He had begun his political career by being so ardent in support of Charles in the collection of ship-money, and had 'so highly misdemeaned himself that he looked for punishment from the parliament; to prevent it, he very early put himself in their service . . . and raised a regiment of foot. These were good, stout, fighting men, but the most licentious, ungovernable wretches that belonged to parliament. As regards himself, no man knew for what reason he chose that side; for he had not understanding enough to judge the equity of the cause, nor piety or holiness; being a foul adulterer all the time he served the parliament, and so unjust that, without any remorse, he suffered his men indifferently to plunder both honest men and cavaliers.'

It is when such a contemporary peep behind the scenes is granted into the personal character of Cromwell's Puritan companions that it is possible to estimate at their exact value those words which he wrote to Major-General Crawford in a letter of March 10th,

1644: 'Sir, the State in choosing men to serve them, takes no notice of their opinions; if they are willing faithfully to serve them, that satisfies. I advised you formerly to bear with men of different minds from yourself.' The man concerning whom Cromwell was writing this letter was accused of being an Anabaptist, and he agreed: 'Admit he be, shall that render him incapable to save the Public. He is indiscreet. It may be so, in some things we have all human infirmities.'

It is one of the many mysteries of Cromwell's mind that with all its depths of mystical religious emotions, he had also a vein of very worldly craftiness that at some times got very near insincerity. He was accused later by his fellow-workers (as will afterwards appear) of treachery to his faith and his cause; and this early alliance between such as Gell and Cromwell is certainly worthy of consideration.

One wonders if he was equally pleased to accept the aid of Chadwick of Nottingham, another ardent Puritan ally, whom Mrs. Hutchinson describes in the *Memoirs*. On 'coming to kiss the king's hand, the king told him he was a very honest man; yet by flatteries and dissimulations, he kept up his credit with the godly, cutting his hair, and taking up a form of godliness, the better to deceive . . . he got abundance of money by a thousand cheats . . . as great a prodigal in spending as knave in getting. . . . Among other villainies which he secretly practiced, he was a libidinous goat.'

Such were the somewhat unpleasant persons who were engaged with Oliver Cromwell in the noble work of saving the liberties of England. All the rogues and adventurers who were not crowding into the parliamen-

tary ranks were very welcome in the king's army; so it would be unfair to suggest that Cromwell got more than his share of them. The first thing that occurred to Prince Rupert's soldiers when they won a battle was to loot any place within reach of their tired horses. Little wonder is it that one of the first impulses of many peaceful men was to form themselves into associations (as they did in Yorkshire) to declare themselves entirely neutral as between Rupert's friends and Oliver's followers; and the bulk of England was only driven into the war because it found itself raided and plundered by both armies, and finally decided that its best chance was to take the side which seemed most likely to win.

But so far, of course, Oliver Cromwell was only a captain of a troop of cavalry. His first serious engagement was at the Battle of Edgehill, on October 23rd, 1642; though he was so little in evidence that some historians have maintained he was not there at all. However, he almost certainly was; and a contemporary record says that he was among those officers who 'never stirred from their troops, but fought till the last minute.' The lessons he learned at Edgehill were the foundation of his future military fame. From that day he knew precisely what Prince Rupert would do if he met him in battle: namely – with the wearisome repetition of a man who does not possess a brain capable of registering an intelligent thought – this foolish Cavalier would charge blindly at one of the parliamentary wings, and, riding straight through it, he would pursue the scattered foe for miles away, and then allow his men to loot anything within reach, such as a baggage-train or a neighbouring town. This was what happened at

Edgehill; and by the time he had returned to the field of battle at sunset, he found that the Puritan army had rallied and almost annihilated Charles's infantry and remaining cavalry.

In this first important battle of his life Cromwell kept his troop of horse tightly under control, while the brainless cavaliers were allowing their men to fight like an unruly mob. It was Prince Rupert who taught Cromwell how not to fight. It was an invaluable aid to victory to be opposed by Rupert in this war, for it was always certain that he would commit the same silly mistake. Cromwell and his fellows won the battles of Marston Moor and Naseby, as we shall see later, because Rupert there repeated his Edgehill errors with the careful accuracy of an automatic machine.

But Cromwell, being a soldier by instinct, could see the advantage of having an army that would ride through its enemies with the rush of an Atlantic wave, as Rupert did. So he also began to look round for men of the courage and nerve of the Cavaliers. It was about this time that he explained his views on army organisation to Hampden, his cousin, in these words: 'Your troops are most of them old, decayed serving men and tapsters, and such kind of fellows; and their troops are gentlemen's sons, younger sons, and persons of quality. Do you think that the spirit of such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen, that have honour and courage and resolution in them? You must get men of a spirit; and take it not ill what I say – I know you will not – of a spirit that is likely to go as far as gentlemen will go, or else you will be beaten still.'

The democrat, the religious believer, vanished somewhat suddenly when Cromwell arrived in the world of war and politics. It is startling to find the fanatic of Huntingdon and St. Ives and Ely hopeless of victory until his followers shall be filled with the spirit of lustful, irreligious Cavaliers. Yet he was not neglectful of moral strength, indeed, insisted on it, when he wrote (September 1643): 'a few honest men are better than numbers. . . . If you choose godly, honest men to be captains of Horse, honest men will follow them. . . . I had rather have a plain, russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for, and loves what he knows, than what you call a gentleman and nothing else. I honour a gentleman that is so indeed. . . . It much concerns your good to have conscientious men.'

The chief part of the civil war was over before Cromwell was in supreme command. But it was his organisation of the Ironsides, and all that grew out of them, that was the winning factor. In the beginning of 1643 Cromwell went to those eastern counties where he was best known, and where the inhabitants were more likely than elsewhere to share his ideals, and set himself to gather the 'godly' men who were to beat the ungodly Cavaliers – by getting their spirit!

In was in September of this same year that he wrote the letter, already mentioned, about his 'russet-coated' ideal captain. But the student of Cromwell's life must get it out of his mind that Oliver found his ideal soldiers in any large number. To imagine that the Puritan ranks were only filled with Puritans is a grave historical error. Sir Charles Firth writes of their early army: 'Some of Essex's foot regiments were excellent, but the

ranks of his cavalry were filled by men attracted solely by high pay and opportunity of plunder.' The Puritan commanders were lucky if they could persuade their men to plunder only the enemy. On September 11th, 1643, Cromwell wrote to St. John: 'many of my Lord of Manchester's troops are come to me: very bad and mutinous, not to be confided in;' and a fortnight after to other friends he confessed: 'many of these men which are of your country's choosing, are so far from serving you, that were it not that I have honest troops to master them, although they be well paid, yet they are so mutinous that I may justly fear they would cut my throat.'

There is no denying that, by some touch of mastery over men which was Cromwell's greatest asset, he did succeed in gathering around him an army – small though it was – such as, perhaps, the world has never seen before or since. He has been thought of as a mystic, which means that he had one of those minds that grasp the all-important truth that spirit is more real than matter. Whether the religious faith of Cromwell and his kind was rational or irrational, it was of the sort that gave a stern backbone to men who had to risk their lives in furtherance of their beliefs. The Cromwellian army, on the whole, was of very mixed quality; but this centre of Cromwell's own choosing was the purer essence of the Puritan soul.

On September 11th Cromwell wrote to his intimate friend, St. John: 'My troops increase. I have a lovely company; you would respect them did you but know them. They are no Anabaptists, they are honest, sober Christians: they expect to be used as men.' Then

follows the usual appeal for money to support them: 'I have little money of my own to help my soldiers. My estate is little. I tell you the business of Ireland and England hath had of me, in money, between eleven and twelve hundred pounds; therefore my private can do little to help the public. You have had my money: I hope in God I desire to venture my skin. So do mine. Lay weight upon their patience; but break it not.'

The general military history of the Puritan War is not a very important part of the life of Cromwell. A great deal of it is the story of stupid leaders and disreputable followers on both sides. There was very little enthusiasm on the part of Englishmen to find either money or men to save the liberty of their country. Indeed, by the December of 1642 the city of London, which was the seat of the rebellion, was resounding with the cries of a mob shouting 'Peace, peace'; and when some more philosophical persons replied with a counter cry of 'Peace and truth,' the impatient answer was 'Hang truth! let us have peace at any price'; and the mob turned on some soldiers near to disarm them, with the curt information that they would be paid no more money if they went on fighting; while someone crudely suggested cutting the throats of the City officials who wanted to continue the struggle.

This was the result of only six months of war; and yet Charles and Cromwell, with the adventurous politicians and soldiers behind both of them, were to allow England no rest for years to come. This national tragedy had its humours as well as its grimness. If the matter had been left to such as Lord Newcastle, the king's great general on one side, and Lord Essex, the

parliamentary leader on the other, the war would be still unfinished to this day – for neither of them had any notion of how to conduct a campaign. Peter Warwick has left us the information that Newcastle was 'a gentleman of grandeur, generosity' and other virtues; but 'had the misfortune to have somewhat of the poet in him; so he chose Sir William Davenant, an eminent, good poet, to be lieutenant-general of his ordinance. This inclination of his own and such kinds of witty society (to be modest in the expression of it) diverted many counsels and lost many opportunities. . . .'

It would be difficult to find a contemporary record which explains more clearly why Cromwell won the civil war. Here was the noble Marquis of Newcastle on one side, making his friend master of ordinance because he was a good poet. On the other side was Cromwell, so lacking in taste that he only wanted good soldiers who, by preference, were also filled with a religious mania to crush the king and the bishops who disagreed with them. What chance had a poet against a religious fanatic at the head of a few troops of horse?

Out of the chaotic confusion and careless listlessness of the early days of the civil war, we see Cromwell very slowly emerging as a figure which grows every month to more commanding importance. It would seem that war had acted on his earlier 'nerves' and dreamy mysticism as the mineral waters of some fashionable spa act on the livers of their patients. Or perhaps we are now faced by the psychological fact that Oliver Cromwell was one of those abnormal men who have double personalities. In this case, a very realistic, hard-riding soldier has suddenly shot into our view; and the

soul-sick man of Huntingdon, who had 'phansies about the Cross', becomes more clearly, after every campaign, the only man who can equal Prince Rupert in the fury of his cavalry charges.

But by the end of 1643 it looked as though Charles was easily master of the parliamentary army – except in the Eastern Counties, where Cromwell was the leading power. Here the royalists were crushed by rapid blows driven home by the infinite energy of the late mental invalid. During the first half of 1643 Colonel Cromwell reported quick dashes delivered all round from his headquarters at Cambridge. Cromwell had, as we know, great belief in prayer; but when it came to meeting Cavaliers, he relied on possessing better arms and better horses than his enemies; and he taught his soldiers the technical details of military service – stabling horses, cleaning arms and such things – as probably no general had troubled to do before, unless, perhaps, Julius Cæsar. But Cromwell was not yet to get his due for all this skill and energy; and, by the irony of fate, the man sent down to be his commander-in-chief in the Eastern Counties was the Earl of Manchester, a member of that Montague family that had bought up the estates of the fallen Cromwells at Hinchinbrook.

In May 1643 Essex called for the Eastern army to come to the assistance of the districts in the west; but Cromwell alone was eager to go, and he set out without his reluctant companion regiments. It was his first big operation in more or less sole control. The beginning was brilliant; for at Grantham on May 13th he reports: 'God hath given us this evening a glorious victory,' when twelve of his troops were faced by twice that

number of Cavaliers. 'With this handful it pleased God to cast the scale . . . our men charging fiercely upon them, by God's providence they were immediately routed. . . . I believe some of our soldiers did kill two or three men apiece in the pursuit.' There are all the elements of the soldier and the fanatic Cromwell in this short despatch: the Semitic joy of the Arab tribesman in killing, and the confusing of God's providence with human tactics.

Three days before this skirmish – for, after all, it is necessary to keep the events of this civil war in their due proportion, lest we confuse the scale of Oliver with the mighty proportions of Julius and Alexander and Napoleon – the king offered to negotiate for peace; but parliament was not likely to give terms to an enemy it could drive off the field. So Cromwell continued to advance as far as Nottingham; while parliament impeached the queen for high treason – it was out for blood not compromise. But there was a disunion among the parliamentary forces, and worse; and on May 23rd Cromwell wrote despairingly to the Mayor of Colchester: 'I beseech you hasten the supply to us: forget not money . . . the foot and dragooners are ready to mutiny. Lay not too much upon the back of a poor gentleman who desires, without much worse, to lay down his life and bleed the last drop to serve the Cause and you. I ask not the money for myself . . . I desire to deny myself, but others will not be satisfied. I beseech you hasten supplies. Forget not your prayers.'

But he begged in vain, and had to fall back as the royalists poured into the Eastern Counties. Cromwell was everywhere in endeavouring to resist them; and

when everybody else was being defeated, he won, on July 27th, a decisive victory over Cavendish (who was killed) at Gainsborough. He describes the fight with his usual energy of prose: 'I immediately fell on his rear with my three troops, which did so astonish him, that he would fain have delivered himself from me, but I pressing on forced them down a hill, drove the General with some of his soldiers into a quagmire, when my Captain lieutenant slew him with a thrust under his short ribs.' Which is a somewhat bloodstained epistle from a disciple of the Gospel of Peace.

This kind of work for the Lord was of the sort to receive earthly reward. The skirmish at Gainsborough made the reputation of Colonel Cromwell: as Whitelock puts it: 'This was the beginning of his great fortunes, and now he begins to appear in the world.' Parliament, wisely deciding that it was well to encourage the efforts of a man who was giving such admirable military evidence of the approval of the Almighty, voted thanks for his 'faithful endeavour to God and the kingdom', and showed its sincerity by granting £3000 to be distributed among his soldiers. It will be observed that the rising for liberty was now beginning to take a clearly financial tone. Indeed, by August of this year parliament had decided that there was not any reasonable hope of persuading Englishmen to rise against tyrants out of a voluntary noble patriotism, so an ordinance was passed making military service compulsory. From this time onward the majority of the parliamentary forces were soldiers conscripted against their will.

In the beginning of August the majority of

members of parliament had voted for negotiations with the king. Whereupon Pym organised one of his mobs to intimidate the Houses. To which a crowd of women replied by angry cries: 'Give us these traitors that were against peace, that we may tear them to pieces. Give us that dog Pym.' It needed a troop of Waller's soldiers to ride them down, before they would stop. By such methods was it necessary to keep revolution alive – by conscription and the riding down of peace demonstrations. On September 11th Cromwell again wrote appealingly to St. John for money: 'If I took pleasure to write to the House in bitterness I have occasion. Of the 3000*l* allotted me I cannot get the part of Norfolk nor Hertfordshire: it had gone before I had it.'

On October 11th Cromwell again showed at the Wincely fight that he was a born soldier. He himself led the van; his horse went down under him, and as he rose he was attacked, but escaped and mounted another horse. In half an hour the enemy had fled in 'plain disorder.' So far, Cromwell was the only parliamentary military leader who had been persistently successful. West and north of London Charles was more than holding his own; three-quarters of the kingdom still accepted his rule. Parliament had taken the oath of the Scottish Solemn League and Covenant on September 25th, which doomed the rebellion as a national movement, for the Scots were aliens and hated in England. Then Pym died in December, and with him expired any hope of the politicians being able to control the insurrection they had so cleverly planned. Henceforth the military leaders will gradually thrust on one side

HARTFORD CHURCH AND FERRY, NEAR HUNTINGDON

Photograph Whitney, Huntingdon

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the political leaders. And of those military leaders Cromwell was firmly pushing himself to the top by his genius for war, his crafty judgment of men, and his fanatical zeal, which was, at times, like a raging flame licking round the doomed foundations of sane English life.

In January 1644 Cromwell was Governor of Ely, his own home. He had come back as a man of great authority, with power to command where he had once to pray. As on the field of battle, his violent nature soon showed itself in civil life. On January 10th he wrote a brutal note to the precentor of the cathedral: 'I require you to forbear altogether your choir service, so unedifying and offensive: and this as you will answer it, if any disorder should arise therefrom. I advise you to catechise, and read and expound the Scriptures to the people.' Since no heed was paid to this insolent order, Cromwell marched into the cathedral with his hat on his head, and a troop of soldiers behind him. He ordered the congregation to dismiss. When the priest calmly continued the service, Cromwell thundered: 'Leave off your fooling and come down, Sir' – and he came down. The Puritan rebellion for liberty was thus getting its will executed by shouting colonels; and the crude tyranny of Cromwell was displacing the subtler tyranny of Laud.

Such are the methods of those who succeed in a revolution; and Cromwell, within a fortnight was made Lieutenant-General, or second in command under the Earl of Manchester, of the Army of the Eastern Association. But his fame was now more than local, and, on February 10th, he was made a member of the

Committee of Both Kingdoms, which at this time ruled England and Scotland – so far as soldiers and plunderers were not already supreme. The Scottish army, in January 1644, had advanced over the border to aid the English Puritans in attacking their common enemy, the Anglican king. Essex and Waller, at the same time, advanced against him from London, and Charles was driven west to Worcester. This left Manchester and Cromwell free to drive northwards, reconquering Lincolnshire; and then they marched to assist the armies of the Scots and Fairfax in besieging York. Prince Rupert came dashing to the relief of the city, and the great Battle of Marston Moor was the result.

As Rupert advanced, the parliamentary and Scottish armies marched to give him battle, but he cleverly crossed their front, on the other side of the River Nidd, as they lay awaiting him on Marston Moor, and joined the Marquis of Newcastle in York. The latter said that they ought not to fight, since the parliamentarians and Scots were 27,000 strong, while the united royalists were only 18,000. But the reckless Rupert declared that his orders from the king were to fight at once. The parliamentary generals, thinking the siege now impossible, were already in retreat southwards when the pursuing royalists compelled them to re-form in battle array as near their former position on the moor as they could reach. After some two hours of cannon fire there was a long pause until five or six o'clock in the evening of July 2nd, during which the parliamentary army dressed its ranks with the pedantic precision then customary in war. Rupert appears to have decided that it was too late to attack that night, and he was at

supper when Cromwell began the battle by a fierce charge with the cavalry of the left wing which he commanded. He was followed by the Scottish Leslie, and between them the royalist Cavaliers were badly broken. Cromwell himself was wounded in the neck by a pistol shot. Manchester's infantry, on Cromwell's right, advancing at the same time as the horse, had also done well. But the rest of the parliamentary army had gone to pieces. Sir Thomas Fairfax and his cavalry (except himself and a few men) had been routed on the right wing, and the infantry regiments in the centre were also smashed.

Here Cromwell's first great act of generalship on a large scale was performed. Immediately his own opening charge had succeeded, he gathered together his troops and reformed them, having learned from the folly of Rupert at Edgehill how not to pursue an already beaten foe. He then looked over the field of battle and grasped the situation with the rapid eye which means genius in war, and led his cavalry, followed by the Eastern Association's infantry, against the rear of the royalists, who were fiercely pressing the Scottish army of the right centre. The Cavaliers of the royalist left wing, who had broken Fairfax (after the usual childish pursuit in search of baggage-trains and other plunder), straggled back in time to be utterly crushed by Cromwell's attack. Soon Newcastle's foot-soldiers were left alone in the field; and, surrounded by now victorious parliamentarians, they perished almost to a man, refusing quarter.

The victory was complete, and it was Cromwell's victory. Of course, he was only a subordinate officer, but

if he had not been there the civil war might have ended in the triumph of Charles on that day. It was the victory of the Eastern Association's army, and that was Cromwell's own creation. In the official despatch to the London government the three generals were clever enough to avoid giving any credit to Cromwell, and some enemies tried to suggest that Leslie's Scottish soldiers did as much as he to win the battle. But the Scots were only a small part of the 4000 cavalry that Cromwell commanded on the left wing; and, in any case, the whole initiative was Cromwell's.

The letter he wrote a few days after the battle is the one in which he broke to Colonel Valentine Walton the news that young Walton had been killed. It has all Cromwell's characteristics. 'Truly England and the Church of God hath had a great favour from the Lord in this great victory given unto us, such as the like never was since this war began. It had all the evidences of an absolute victory obtained by the Lord's blessing upon the godly party principally. We never charged but we routed the enemy. The left wing, which I commanded, being our own horse, saving a few Scots in our rear, bent all the Prince's horse. God made them as stubble to our swords. . . . I believe of twenty thousand the Prince hath not four thousand left. Give glory, all the glory, to God.' He then announces the loss of Walton's son; and even in describing the death-scene to the father, Cromwell's blood-lust revels in satisfaction of the slaughter. As he lay dying, young Walton 'said one thing lay upon his spirit. I asked him what it was. He told me that it was that God had not suffered him to be more the executioner of His enemies. . . .

He was a precious young man, fit for God. . . . He is a glorious saint in Heaven.' Carlyle even found evidence in this letter that it was the desire to avenge Walton (who was killed in the preliminary cannon fire of the afternoon) that roused Cromwell to force on the battle that evening. The repeated evidence of Oliver Cromwell's joy at the slaying of enemies is a continual fact which cannot be neglected as a very substantial part of his character.

After this Battle of Marston Moor, Charles had never any chance of a military success; and, on the other side, the extremists were setting their teeth with determination to get the crushing victory over the king which the moderate Lord Manchester and his like dreaded might happen. The open struggle between the independent extremist military party, led by Cromwell and others, and the parliamentary party of compromising Presbyterians, now emerges into more open day. There are indications of it in a letter of September 6th, 1644, from Cromwell to Walton: 'We hope to forget our wants which are exceeding great and desire to refer the many slanders heaped upon us by false tongues to God, who will in due time make it appear to the world that we study the glory of God, the honour and liberty of Parliament, for which we unanimously fight, without seeking our own interests. . . . We have some amongst us much slow in action. . . . Because some of us are enemies to rapine, and other wickednesses, we are said to be factious, to seek to maintain our opinions on religion by force, which we detest and abhor. I profess I could never satisfy myself of the justness of this War, but from the authority of

Parliament to maintain its rights.' One can gather from this very clever note that Cromwell is endeavouring to clear himself of some of the damaging criticism which most impartial students will judge to be due to him.

The opening sentences in this letter show signs that the victor of Marston Moor is now ambitious for a wider field of action: 'We do with grief of heart resent the sad condition of our Army in the West; truly had we wings we would fly thither.' The master of the Eastern Association desired to extend his range more into the heart of the struggle. The longed-for order came in August; none too soon, for Essex's army had been almost surrounded in Cornwall. But the Earl of Manchester was tired of the war, and when Charles marched towards Oxford again after his western triumph, Manchester made many excuses for not going to give battle to his king, and loitered for two months in Lincolnshire.

Cromwell was straining to get at the enemy. At last Manchester was compelled to move west, and, joining Essex and Waller, they fought the second Battle of Newbury on October 27th, 1644. The parliamentarians had almost twice as many men as Charles, but he was clever enough to escape, for Manchester did not support the early attack that was lead by Skippon and Balfour, with Cromwell and Waller assisting them, and nobody did himself much credit except Skippon.

After such a military muddle it was clear that something must be done, so Cromwell went back to London and took his seat in parliament on November 25th. He at once attacked Manchester, saying that the earl 'hath

always been indisposed and backward to engagements, and the ending of the war by the sword, and for such a peace to which victory would be a disadvantage. And since the taking of York [as the result of the Battle of Marston Moor], as if the Parliament had now advantage full enough, he hath declined whatsoever tended to farther advantage upon the Enemy . . . persuading and deluding the Council to neglect one opportunity with pretence of another, and this again of a third, and at last by persuading that it was not fit to fight at all.'

Manchester promptly replied in the House of Lords; and he had already told his fellow-peers what he thought of Cromwell in a letter which appears to have been written from the field: 'He knows I always placed him in chiefest esteem. But it is true that of late I have not given so free and full a power unto him as formerly I did . . . and indeed I grew jealous that his designs were not as he made profession to me; for his expressions were sometimes against the nobility; that he hoped to live to see never a nobleman in England. . . . He hath further expressed himself with contempt of the Assembly of Divines, to whom I pay a reverence . . . yet these he termed persecutors; and that they persecuted honester men than themselves. His animosity against the Scotch nation. . . . pressing for their discipline . . . he could as soon draw his sword against them as against any in the King's army . . . he told me that he would not deny but that he desired to have none in my army but such as were of the Independent judgment, giving me this reason: – That in case there should be propositions for peace or any

conclusion of a peace such as might not stand with those ends that honest men should aim at, this army might prevent such a mischief.'

It is perfectly fair to quote this letter of an opponent against Cromwell, for he himself has many times made the same confession of his opinions, and still more by many actions. The result was very drastic: for Cromwell had now to face the enmity of all the moderate men who wanted a very easy compromise with the king, that would not involve any revolutionary results – such as the end of the lords. He further had against him all the Presbyterians – who were the moderate men in religion; and that meant the enmity of the Scots with their military strength. Cromwell was, in short, now developing a political creed which was to fit in with his new military actions. It was the beginning of the political army which was soon to take full control of the civil war, and push the parliamentarians very much into the background.

Cromwell made his first great parliamentary speech on December 9th, in continuation of the previous attack on Manchester: 'It is now a time to speak or forever hold the tongue. The important occasion now is no less than to save a Nation, out of a bleeding, nay almost dying condition: which the long continuance of this War hath already brought it into. . . . We shall make the kingdom weary of us, and hate the name of a Parliament. For what do the enemy say? Nay, what do many say that were friends at the beginning of the Parliament? Even This, That the Members of both Houses have got great places and commands, and the sword into their hands; and what by interest in the

Parliament, what by power in the Army, will perpetually continue themselves in grandeur, and not permit the War speedily to end, lest their own power should determine with it. . . . I do conceive if the Army be not put into another method, and the War more vigorously prosecuted, the People can bear War no longer and will enforce you to a dishonourable Peace.'

Cromwell went on, with his crafty skill in smoothing down the attack so as to get his desired end more easily, and told the Commons that they should not worry about censuring any generals because of their mistakes – for 'I know they can rarely be avoided in military matters' – but they should seek a remedy against further trouble in the future. He also very skilfully quieted the suspicions of the Commons that this was an intrigue of the military men to get power into their own hands: 'I can speak this for my own soldiers that they look not upon me but upon you. . . . They do not idolize me, but look upon the Cause they fight for. . . . You may lay upon them what commands you please.'

All this skilful political craftsmanship on Cromwell's part soon got the result he desired, namely, parliament in the first part of 1645 passed the famous Self-denying Ordinance, which said that no member of the Houses of Parliament should hold any military or civil office during the war. This dislodged the Earls of Essex and Manchester from their commands, and Sir Thomas Fairfax was chosen as the commander-in-chief. Of course the ordinance applied to Cromwell also, but he entirely disregarded it – as he probably always intended to do. Then another singular and suggestive incident happened: Cromwell's regiment was ordered to go to

Waller's assistance in his campaign in the west of England. It mutinied and refused to go, but immediately Cromwell was allowed to go in command, it submitted to orders. Which has all the symptoms of more subtle intrigue on Cromwell's part. Waller found Cromwell a most effective and obedient subordinate, but, as Sir Charles Firth sums up, 'What struck Waller most was that, whilst a man of few words himself, Cromwell had a way of making others talk, and a singular sagacity in judging their characters, and discovering their secrets.'

The Cromwell of the early days at Huntingdon had grown into a very unexpected figure that it is hard to believe can be the same man. The war had brought him into a great world of intense reality, which allowed no time for the mystical mooning that had once threatened to wreck the young Oliver's life. The effect has been almost magical. Cromwell had become a great cavalry leader, a very subtle politician, and the man who had seemed to be merely a good judge of horses and cattle is turning out to be an exceptionally fine judge of the characters of men. In short, we are clearly dealing with a man of genius.

Yet there was something more sinister than genius behind the new developments that were now taking place in general, of what the drastic development of Cromwell was only one manifestation. It was now to be war to the bitter end. In January, almost contemporaneously with the Self-denying Ordinance, the two Hothams had been beheaded for 'betraying' the parliamentary cause. The long-drawn-out trial of Archbishop Laud had been brought to an end by his

beheading a few days later. The Earl of Essex had raised an angry voice at this outrage: 'Is this the liberty which we promised to maintain with our blood? Shall posterity say that to save them from the yoke of the King we have placed them under the yoke of the populace?' The protest was noble and right, except that Essex was in grave error if he thought it was the 'populace' that desired Laud's death. His murderers were a small gang of narrow-minded Scottish ministers and English fanatics, who had succeeded in making the defence of English political liberty into a crusade against the Anglican Church under the pretence that it was the shadow of Rome. And of this folly and crime, Cromwell must take his full share in the judgment of history.

It was Cromwell who had been mainly responsible for Fairfax's election to the chief command of the army in January 1645. In June, on the petition of Fairfax, Cromwell was elected by the Commons to be lieutenant-general; that is, second in command, with the cavalry as his particular department. Fairfax was a man of charm, perhaps a better soldier even than Cromwell; brave, honest, and straightforward, and of a religious faith that was far broader than the parody that the fanatics called salvation. For the present he was good enough for the extremists' purpose, for he was a dashing officer, who both desired and knew how to crush his foe.

The 'New Model' army which the Commons had been planning since November 1644, was getting into shape. It has been generally assumed that this was Cromwell's brilliant idea. But it was Waller's suggestion. Cromwell's intellect was never a powerful machine,

but as a man of action he carried Waller's idea into practice – a very different story. The old system of a citizen militia of trained bands had broken down. It was a final proof that the people of England were not enthusiastically in favour of the parliamentary cause. For the new model was a standing army of conscripted men. The French ambassador reported to his government that young men had to be seized in the streets by force before they would fight against their king. So we must get it out of our heads that Cromwell is going to win his victories with an army of patriots dying for their country's liberty. However, we must not overlook the equally important fact that he had a nucleus of officers who were full of political and religious theories that did influence their actions, and were soon to influence history. It is also necessary to remember those of them who were playing for their private interest, under cover of their various public creeds. The acceptance of the Covenant was demanded of officers (but not of the private soldiers), in the hope that it would make them faithful to the parliamentary Presbyterians; but few of them regarded their oath in this light. The officers were, in the main, of the country gentleman class, with a few of humbler birth, just enough to give colour to the pretence that this was the army of the common people of England.

Cromwell, for the first time as lieutenant-general, joined Fairfax in the field on June 13th, 1645, and on the next day the Battle of Naseby was fought. The result cannot be better described than in Cromwell's own crisp words, written to the Speaker Lenthall: 'We marched yesterday after the King. . . . He drew out

to meet us. . . . We after three hours fight very doubtful, at last routed his army; killed and took about 5000, very many officers . . . we took also about 200 carriages, all he had, and all his guns, being 12 in number. We pursued the enemy from three miles short of Harborough to nine miles beyond, even to the sight of Leicester, whither the King fled. Sir, this is none other than the hand of God; and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him.' Then Cromwell, writing as a clever politician, sought to drive home the lesson which he had already delivered as a soldier: 'Honest men served you faithfully in this action. Sir, they are trusty: I beseech you in the name of God, not to discourage them. . . . He that ventures his life for the liberty of his country, I wish he trust God for the liberty of his conscience and you for the liberty he fights for.' Which was a hint to parliament that the soldiers expected to be listened to by the politicians. The Commons, seeing the hint, left out this part of the letter when they printed it for public reading!

Cromwell may have believed that the Battle of Naseby was God's special work, but it was fairly clear to more worldly men that Cromwell had the chief part in the victory. The parliamentary infantry regiments were near defeat, and Prince Rupert had crushed Ireton's cavalry, and then, of course, had gone off to waste his time on trying to plunder the baggage – it was impossible to teach Rupert any common sense of this kind. But Cromwell (though he had not mentioned it in his letter) had led his cavalry with a terrific charge against the horse on the royalist left wing, and

then, drawing them up at once, had turned, as he always did, on the royalist centre, whilst Rupert was away. The success was complete. It must be remembered that here, as at Marston Moor, the parliamentary army had the advantage of almost double numbers. It must also not be forgotten that after the battle the Puritans – on the plea of morality – massacred in cold blood a hundred Irishwomen found in the royal camp, and gashed the faces of all the Englishwomen found there. Such was the peculiar species of religion that Cromwell and his friends had deduced from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. It was a deduction that could only have been made by minds that were on the verge of insanity.

Henceforward, Charles I.'s cause was a broken wreck in any military sense, and it was mainly a matter of sweeping up the fragments, in sieges of towns and the fortified houses of royalist nobles. The entire want of enthusiasm on either side is very clear from the fact that at Naseby five thousand of the king's army had surrendered; less than a thousand having lost their lives by resisting. On the parliamentary side it is likewise sufficient evidence of lack of spirit that they so nearly allowed themselves to be beaten at the first onrush of the king's troops.

On July 10th Cromwell played his usual efficient part with his cavalry at the Battle of Langport, once again combining sweeping charges with reserving his troops from vain pursuit. But this victory may have been an advantage to Charles, for it was a defeat of the scoundrel Goring, who had all along hampered the royalist cause. In August Cromwell was in the west

dealing with detachments of 'clubmen,' whose main wish appears to have been to save their lands from plunderers of both armies, and to force the two enemies to make peace. Cromwell's official report was: 'We have taken about 300, many of which are poor, silly creatures, whom you will please to let me send home.' But the less prejudiced critic will see nothing particularly silly in trying to save their farm-stock from professional soldiers who were a nuisance to the nation – a motive tersely summed up by the rustic motto on the royalist peasants' banner:

'If you offer to plunder our cattle,
Be assured that we will give you battle.'

Which sound common sense was ascribed by the earnest Puritans to the profanity of 'malignant priests'!

In September Cromwell was in the south clearing up the resisting spots. On October 6th, 1645, he wrote to the Speaker reporting the capture of Winchester, which needed a week's battering before a breach was made, whereupon the governor surrendered without further resistance. 'You see God is not weary in doing you good . . . when he comes by His power into the hearts of your enemies, making them quit places of strength. . . . It is very likely it would have cost much blood to have gained by storm. We have not lost twelve men: this is repeated to you that God may have all the praise.' It was after the fall of Winchester that Cromwell hanged a man for plundering the royalists, and sent five others to the king, with permission to punish them as he pleased. They were released, with thanks for Cromwell's courtesy.

On October 14th Cromwell reported the capture of Basing House, an event which gave him peculiar joy, because it was the home of the Marquis of Winchester, a staunch Roman Catholic, who was himself captured. Cromwell, full of red fury at the thought of contamination by so much false doctrine, asked the Speaker that the house should be destroyed – as one burns a hut infected by plague. He had already allowed his men to kill the inhabitants freely, and to loot. Hugh Peters, one of Cromwell's pet ministers of the gospel, was present and reported on the capture of this 'nest of Idolatry . . . Popish books many, with copes and such utensils. . . . The plunder of the soldiers continued (all day).' Dr. Gardiner wrote: 'Six of the ten priests in the house were slain, and the four others reserved for the gallows and the knife.' He adds that the marquis owed his life to the happy chance that he had once treated Colonel Hammond, one of his captors, with courtesy. It was Hammond who carried the report of this capture to London, and received £200 for his trouble – a reminder that rebellion is a trade as well as enthusiasm. This taking of Basing House is an example of that very disagreeable side of Cromwell, who became in great part mad when within sight of a papist. His own comment on it, in his letter to the Speaker was: 'I thank God I can give you a good account of Basing,' he began; and then, after avoiding any mention of the grosser deeds, he finished: 'God exceedingly abounds in his goodness to us and will not be weary until righteousness and peace meet. . . . .' The killing of papist priests was always a sign of a divine blessing on this strangely distorted soul.

So certain were the Parliamentarians that they had won the war that they began to draft their terms of peace. Amongst them, it is to our immediate purpose to note, that Fairfax and Cromwell were to be made barons, with handsome estates. In truth, the army of Cromwell and Fairfax, thus officially described as the 'arm of God,' was irresistible. England became an impossible dwelling for any man who dared to contradict the desires of a Puritan commander; and, on the morning of April 27th, 1646, disguised as a servant, Charles slipped out of Oxford, which had been his capital city since the war began, and, after various wanderings, on May 5th joined himself to the Scots in their camp at Newark, hoping to persuade them to take up his cause. The Scots received him, intending to use him as a tool in their own political gamble. The day was soon coming when Cromwell would crush both of them, and push both monarchy and Presbyterianism out of his way to supreme power. But with this new move on the part of Charles and the surrender of Oxford to the Parliamentarians on June 24th, the first civil war came to an end. The factors of the struggle then rearranged themselves in a different way.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUPREMACY OF THE ARMY

The parliamentarians had now beaten Charles in the field of battle, and the casual and badly informed onlooker might have imagined that the Puritan politicians who had started the war would now rule England according to their ideal methods of government. But history does not work out in that simple manner. The party which wins a war is so rarely the party which gets the spoils. In days to come the classic example of this cruel paradox was to be the great French Revolution, when enthusiastic 'democrats' rose with arms and guillotines to win liberty for the people; but after all their vast and stupid strivings and sacrifices, it was found that instead of gaining liberty for themselves, they had won an empire for Napoleon. So in this earlier and smaller case of the Puritan Wars, the Parliamentarians had set out – so they said – to win a popular government by elected representatives; whereas now when the war was won it was not parliament but the army that was in power – and the army was every day growing more distinctly to mean Oliver Cromwell.

But there was now a momentary lull, and the army seemed to disappear from the centre of the picture. Cromwell ceased to be the soldier, and came back to London to perform his duties as a member of parliament. Whatever was the change that was coming over

him, certainly he was not the man who had left Huntingdon and St. Ives and Ely, to become a man of war. That he should have become of a military mind and pose would not be astonishing. But there was much more than that. The man of pious meetings was becoming the man of the world.

There were early indications of this when Richard Baxter, the Puritan divine, joined Cromwell and his army, immediately after the battle of Naseby. In his own words: 'As soon as I came to the army Oliver Cromwell coldly bid me welcome and never spoke one word to me more while I was there . . . and his secretary gave out that there was a reformer come to undeceive them and to save Church and State, with some such other jeers. . . .' Baxter tells of the opinions that were floating about Cromwell's camp at this time, in the first flush of the Naseby victory. Cromwell's chief officers were chatting thus: 'What were the lords of England but William the Conqueror's colonels? Or the barons but his majors? Or the knights but his captains?' Baxter was horrified at the unrestrained liberty of thought, both religious and civil, and announced his intention of reforming this anarchy in the army.

The simple Baxter was also astonished and grieved to discover that the soldiers: 'thought God's providence would cast the trust of religion and the kingdom upon them as conquerors; they made nothing of all the most wise and godly in the armies and garrisons that were not of their way. . . .' They most honoured the Separatists, Anabaptists and Antinomians. Then to all this indignant criticism is added the information:

'but Cromwell and his Council took on them to join themselves to no party, and to be for the liberty of all.'

In this somewhat childlike statement by Richard Baxter can be found the main elements of the new situation. The army was made up, like all armies, of very varied sorts of men who had not much respect for any pedantic religion or political creed; and certainly were not inclined to allow an orthodox Presbyterian Puritanism to be imposed on them because it suited the political purposes of Parliamentarian leaders, who wanted to please and conciliate the Scottish army. Having won the war by their own sweat and blood, the soldiers began to talk rather loudly of their right to have a say in the settlement. It is all very vague yet, this military philosophy of government, yet the army, having ceased to fight for politicians, had certainly begun to talk politics. Then there was the chief factor of all – Cromwell and his brother-officers, who were in the background, as it were, apparently of no particular side. The more experienced onlooker will probably suspect that they were waiting to see how they could float most pleasantly with the tide of history.

Cromwell was not yet powerful enough to impose his will. He must still ask favours of others. On August 10th, 1646, he ends a letter to Fairfax: 'Sir, I hope you have not cast me off. Truly I may say, no one more affectionately honours nor loves you. You and yours are in my daily prayers.' Yet Cromwell was a great soldier, and in October parliament voted that an estate worth £2500 a year, part of the confiscated lands of the Marquis of Worcester, should be given to him. As in all 'democratic' revolutions, the first 'reform'

that is accomplished is to see that the leaders get the first share of the spoils. There was a good reason why parliament should throw something to the soldiers, for it was becoming a subject of common gossip that the politicians of the Long Parliament were doing themselves very well out of the lands and moneys that passed through their hands. Dr. Cunningham, in his great history of English political economy, wrote: 'The Long Parliament attained an unfortunate notoriety for the worst forms of political corruption. . . . Parliament, by the confiscation of Crown and Ecclesiastical lands, threw an immense amount of real estate into the market, and some of the members were enabled to become purchasers at very low rates. Lenthall, the Speaker of the House of Commons, did not set an example of uprightness. Oliver Cromwell earned the gratitude of honest citizens by evicting the gang of unscrupulous politicians who were plotting to prolong their service of authority.' But this is anticipating future events. For the moment, a letter written by Lady Verney is illuminating: 'Everyone tells me there is no hope of doing anything in the House of Commons except by bribery.' So she adds that she is sending £50 to the Speaker's sister-in-law!

All this is very necessary information in a life of Cromwell, for his main business was now to be the crushing of the Parliamentary party which his strong arm had placed in power. There were, certainly, a multitude of good reasons for this paradoxical action. But the biographer is compelled to show startled surprise at the skill with which the apparently simple mind of Cromwell grew into such a polished weapon of crafty

political intrigue. His most obvious rival for power in England was the Scottish Presbyterian army, to which the king had fled as a last hope of saving himself from his Puritan enemies. But the Presbyterian Scots, who had now annihilated Montrose's royalist army at Philiphaugh (in September 1645), could not find much use for a king who insisted on bishops, and, having a national instinct for thinking in terms of finance – which in this case they happily combined with their national interest in religion – they sold Charles to the English parliament for £400,000; when half the money had been paid they handed over the king, and their army recrossed the border in February, 1647.

Charles, a beaten man, by both English and Scottish armies, was now the most loved public man in England. His journey from the north (as the prisoner of parliament) was a triumphant procession of popular welcome. A contemporary news letter records: 'The bells rang and great guns went off. . . . Multitudes of people resorted to welcome His Majesty, the road from Harborow to Holmby being adorned with thousands and thousands of spectators, crying with a loud voice, "God bless your Majesty." '

Cromwell and the English army – so far as it had any opinions at all – hated the Scots as intolerant Presbyterians and, still more, as a rival military power; and, having thus happily got rid of the northern barbarians, they set themselves to the complicated work of beating their other two enemies, Charles and parliament. They desired to make the king do what they wanted, and to prevent him doing what the parliament wanted. The issue between the two, army

and parliament, has been hidden in many abstract phrases of political philosophy and religious dogma; but, with a few great exceptions, both sides were mainly interested in retaining power in their own hands. Sometimes they conveniently and happily persuaded themselves that their own power was for the good of the nation. Their arguments were not often very convincing; but their acts were generally overwhelming proof that the popular good was of little importance in their plans.

The serious and impartial thinkers of England were now faced by two chief fears: one of the despotism of the army, and the other of the tyranny of parliament. These two rival forces were glaring at each other with deep suspicion racking their nerves. On March 1st, 1647, Cromwell wrote to Fairfax: 'There want not, in all places, men who have so much malice against the army as besots them. . . . Never were the spirits of men more embittered than now. Surely the Devil hath but a short time. Sir, it's good the beast is fixed against all this. The naked simplicity of Christ, with that wisdom He please to give, and patience, will overcome all this.'

The bitterness to which he thus referred had a very human explanation. Parliament having, as it thought, won the war, did not want to keep an expensive army in pay a moment longer than was necessary, and it therefore proposed to demobilise it as rapidly as it could. Further, it did not intend (if we can judge by its acts) to pay a penny more of the long arrears of pay than could possibly be helped. The army being made up of human beings (and not of saints, as Cromwell had hoped) somewhat naturally objected to this low conduct.

The politician then tried to persuade the soldier to enlist for service against the Irish papists; but the men showed every intention of getting paid for past services before they took on new ones.

The Lords brought matters to a crisis by refusing to raise any more money to pay the army on any terms: and in March the Commons ordered that no one (except Fairfax) should hold higher rank than that of colonel. This was aimed straight at Cromwell. It is proof that he had been now singled out as the man who counted most, and was therefore most feared. An interesting revelation of his character then followed: he at once began negotiating with the Elector Palatine for entering his service as a soldier on the Continent. It is a proof that Cromwell liked soldiering; he was a man of war, of force, by instinct. But he must have seen by now that there were plenty of opportunities of using force in England; for the army officers and men had begun to petition parliament for their arrears of pay and the removal of their many grievances. They were, in the main, quite reasonable demands; but it is noteworthy that at first Cromwell did not, openly at least, come out on their side. Indeed, the rhetorical revolutionary, John Lilburne, accused him of corrupt treachery: 'O dear Cromwell, the Lord open thine eyes and make thy heart sensible of those snares that are laid for thee in that vote of the £2500 *per annum* . . . betraying us, our wives and children into the Haman-like tyrannical clutches of Holles and Stapleton. . . . O Cromwell, thou art led by the nose by two unworthy, covetous earthworms, Vane and St. John. . . . And if this be true, as I am too much

afraid it is, then I say, accursed be the day that ever the House of Commons bribed you with a vote of £2500 *per annum* to betray and destroy us.'

The honest Lilburne was probably not justified in this accusation – so far as Cromwell was concerned – but it is chiefly interesting as confirmation that Cromwell was not yet openly stirring up the army to revolt against the parliament. Nevertheless, the Commons began to discuss arresting him, which is proof that they had other opinions of Cromwell's innocency of conspiracy. The folly of the politicians is very amazing, for the bulk of the army had no political views of any importance; and the soldiers would have disbanded quietly and gone home, if they had only received the pay due to them. There were a few men anxious to use the army for their own political purposes – good or bad – but there is little evidence that the soldiers would have followed these intriguers, if it had not been for their anger at being defrauded of their pay.

Baxter had said of the army: 'Abundance of the common troopers I found to be honest, sober, orthodox men, and others tractable . . . but a few proud, self-conceited, hot-headed sectaries had got into the highest places, and were Cromwell's chief favourites, and by their heat and activity bore down the rest . . . and were the soul of the army.' How far Cromwell was the inciting factor and an intriguer will perhaps always be debated ground; but certainly the discontent of the army grew serious. The 'Agitators,' that is the elected representatives of the regiments, began to organise for defence against the parliament's obvious intention to disband the soldiers without remedy of their grievances.

It is probable that about this time designing men saw that a discontented army might be used for political purposes – as it had been used to defeat Charles, so now it could be used against the Houses of Parliament.

Cromwell was one of these, there can be little doubt. His aims were, on the whole, honest and unselfish. He wanted to have what he believed was political liberty, and he wanted that somewhat hysterical kind of mental condition which he called religious liberty. These two desires led him to the necessity of crushing both King Charles and the Presbyterian Parliamentarians. It is important to be quite clear that the army was not very much concerned about any of these philosophical fads; Baxter's statement is again fairly decisive on this point: 'For the greatest part of the common soldiers, especially of the foot, were ignorant men of little religion.' As to the political side of the matter, there again these soldiers who had won Naseby and have come down in orthodox history as the 'New Model' of earnest Puritan enthusiasm, were, as Baxter tells us, largely men who had been previously fighting for the king, had come over as prisoners, among the other spoils of war, and 'would do anything to please their officers.'

In other words, the history of the rising of the New Army against the Old Parliament, turns out, on inspection, to have little to do with deep philosophy or high politics, but only with the simple human determination of soldiers to get their pay, and the skilful use of this discontented army by leaders who had views and intentions of their own. It became clearer every day that parliament would not pay the army if it could

help it, and that unless the soldiers kept together they would be disbanded or enlisted for service in Ireland.

The main dates of this new development are fixed by events in Cromwell's life. At the beginning of May 1647 the Commons asked him to go down to the soldiers and endeavour to talk them into obedience. With him went Ireton, who had married Cromwell's daughter, Bridget, in 1646; Fleetwood, who was to marry her on Ireton's death; and Skippon. The soldiers stood firm, officers and men, and issued a *Declaration of the Army*. Cromwell said these demands were reasonable, and promised that parliament was already taking steps to send six weeks arrears of pay, and to protect soldiers by an Ordinance of Indemnity for any illegal actions they had done in the course of the war. He added an apparently sincere appeal to obey 'that authority that is over both us and them. If that authority falls to nothing, nothing can follow but confusion.' This deep respect for law and order was one of the paradoxes of the complex mind of this revolutionary man. He would lead a rebellion to-day, and to-morrow pray fervently for order – but he was never a clear thinker.

However, the politicians were only playing for time, and the soldiers knew it. The Presbyterian leaders were negotiating with the Scottish army to march into England to save them from the Independent Army. So sure were the Parliamentarians of this alien support that on May 25th they ordered immediate disbandment if the soldiers would not take service in Ireland. The army was now roused to action. When, at the end of May, the commissioners of parliament came to disband

Fairfax's regiment there was a prompt mutiny, and the regiment marched off to the general rendezvous which Fairfax had already fixed; so the mutiny was practically inspired by headquarters.

On May 31st Cromwell asked some intimate friends to meet at his house in Drury Lane (between London and Westminster, as it was in those days), and there Cornet Joyce received the orders of Cromwell (who, be it remembered, was still officially lieutenant-general of the army) to go down to Holmby and guard Charles carefully, in order that he should not be carried off or escape to join the threatening army from Scotland. Joyce was already intrusted to commit another act of war on the way down, for he was to call at Oxford and seize the artillery stores which parliament had ordered to be brought to London.

Joyce performed both services with despatch; indeed, he did more, for he brought back Charles to Newmarket. On the day before he seized the king, Cromwell fled from London and his seat in the Commons and joined the army. After his apparently sincere work in quieting the soldiers, and his appeals to them to obey the orders of lawful authority, this sudden move needs explanation. Professor Gardiner thinks he was compelled to change his methods immediately he was informed that the Presbyterians were plotting to bring in an invading Scottish army to crush the English soldiers. Hence his order to seize the king before the Scots could get him.

Now that his hesitation was over, and he was practically in the field again, Cromwell acted with his usual military decision. He restored discipline in the army

so quickly that the Agitators began to take a very subordinate position. Fairfax and his Council of War controlled everything, and, as Sir Charles Firth says: 'in that body Cromwell was the ruling spirit.' The sharp-eyed Lilburne reviewed the position, and, on July 1st, 1647, he wrote to Cromwell: 'You have robbed by your unjust subtilty and shifting tricks the honest and gallant Agitators of all their power and authority, and solely placed it in a thing called a Council of War, or rather a Cabinet junta of seven or eight self-ended fellows, that so you may make your own ends.' This letter is significant evidence of Cromwell's methods, and it is one of the most important documents in his biography, even though we make allowance for the fact that it is an opponent's statement. The Commons were naturally alarmed by this energy, and took a step which is significant of their real though concealed object in desiring to retain power. They now, on this same June 3rd, in their fear revived a committee which they had formed to examine charges of bribery brought against themselves or their servants. They wished to conciliate their enemies.

On June 10th Cromwell and his chief fellow-officers sent a manifesto (which he probably, in the main, wrote himself) to the Lord Mayor and Council of London. It again shows Cromwell's desire to find a way out of the dispute by reasonable compromise. It protested that: 'the sum of all these our desires as soldiers is no other than a desire of satisfaction to our demands as soldiers, and reparation upon those who have tried to destroy the army and to engage the Kingdom in a new war . . . as having no other way to protect themselves

from question and punishment but by putting the Kingdom into blood, under pretence of their honour and their love to the Parliament, as if that were dearer to them than to us, or as if they had given greater proof of their faithfulness to it than we. . . . We have said before and profess it now, we desire no alteration of the Civil Government. We desire not to intermeddle with, or in the least to interrupt, the settling of the Presbyterial Government. Nor did we seek to open a licentious liberty, under pretence of obtaining ease for tender consciences. When the State have once made a settlement, we have nothing to say but to submit or suffer. . . . If, after all this you be reduced to take up arms in opposition to, or hindrance of these our just undertakings, we hope by this brotherly premonition, to the sincerity whereof we call God to witness, we have freed ourselves from all that ruin which may befall that great and populous city; having hereby washed our hands thereof, we rest, your affectionate friends to serve you, Thomas Fairfax, Oliver Cromwell,' and the other chief officers.

This document has been quoted at some length, for it would be hard to find any other more typical of Cromwell's mind and actions. It is a letter of frank threats to the inhabitants of the City of London that if they will not do what the army desires, there will be 'ruin' for them. Yet he is able calmly – or would insolently be a better word? – to announce that they do not desire 'to intermeddle.' The whole document is an amazing example of the ease with which Cromwell could persuade himself that he was doing right, and therefore that it was always right to use force if it were

necessary to put his righteous ideas into practice. A man who could write any such manifesto had either no sense of humour, or he was of limited intellect or a hypocrite. Yet it is hard to prove conclusively that Cromwell had any of those characteristics in a dominant degree. His mind must at places be accepted as a paradoxical thing beyond logical argument.

It was all illogical waste-paper, for it was written by the leaders of an army that was already marching on London at that very moment. But the Presbyterian party was of a composition that did not merit, or gain, much sympathy. Cromwell did not yet wish to press his blow home. At the end of June a letter from a London wife to a husband in Ireland, said: 'We look every day for a siege, but I hope God will protect his own. The army will never rest till they have purged some of their gross injustice and bribery.' The members of the Commons knew their weak spot; and again they promised to issue an ordinance that no member should take profits from office, or sequestration or grant until the state was free of debt. It has been the weak spot of all revolutions since the beginning of history: the 'reformers' were making revolution into a profitable trade.

Then the army demanded that eleven members of the House of Commons should be tried for tyranny; they had to leave the House, while many Presbyterians felt it safer to follow them. Wherever Cromwell appears effectively in history it is as the man of force with an army behind him, as in this case. The competition between army and parliament in offering terms to Charles continued. The Scots offered an army, but Charles declined it curtly, for he had reason to think

that the English army would be more generous. On June 25th Cromwell gave instructions that Charles was to have his chaplains with him, even if parliament sent orders to the contrary. On July 4th Cromwell had an interview with the king, and both seemed very satisfied.

On July 11th Bellievre, the French ambassador, who was trying to assist in the negotiations, had a serious conversation with Cromwell, who then made one of the most cryptic remarks of his somewhat cryptic life. The ambassador was bold enough to question Cromwell as to what he was seeking out of all this tumult, what was his real ambition? The reply was: 'No one rises so high as he who knows not whither he is going.' It was one of the most important sentences he ever spoke, for it was clearly the reply of a genius in politics and a master in intrigue and diplomatic craft. It also shows that Cromwell's aims were by this time a problem for diplomatic circles; and the answer surely is convincing evidence that Cromwell himself had begun to suspect at least the possibility of his own rise to supreme power.

When Berkeley came over to England to negotiate between king and people, he soon became sure that Cromwell and Ireton were ready to come to reasonable terms with Charles; and an army agitator told him that Cromwell was a hypocrite who would take any side that suited his own interests. But a month or so later we find Mrs. Hutchinson, who regarded Cromwell as a monster of dissimulation and craftiness, writing: 'The king, by reason of his daily converse with the officers had begun tampering with them . . . but Cromwell

was at this time so uncorruptibly faithful to his trust and to the people's interest, that he could not be drawn in to practice even his own usual and natural dissimulation on this occasion.' Mobs collected in the city of London, professing to take the Presbyterian Parliamentarian side; but in truth they were mainly apprentices who were anxious to have an increase in the number of their holidays. However, the Independent members of the House were frightened, and fled to the army for safety. This brought on another definite move, for the soldiers marched to Hounslow, 20,000 strong, and carried the refugee members back to the House, where they demanded that all business done since they had fled should be wiped off the records; and, when the opposition members hesitated to obey, Cromwell marched a regiment of cavalry into Hyde Park and threatened to advance to the House.

It was scarcely worth calling this parliamentary government. Cromwell had, in this instance, shown his sympathy with those who wanted to 'purge' the House of its stubborn members, but Fairfax, unlike Cromwell, had an instinctive dread of violence, and refused to help in this way, so Cromwell had taken this action in spite of him. It was the first definite sign that Cromwell meant to do as he pleased. It was at this time (if not earlier) that he had said: 'these men will never leave till the army pull them out by the ears.' And of two of the best of them he said: 'I know nothing to the contrary but what I am as well able to govern the kingdom as either of them.' It is useless to assert, after such words, that Cromwell was prepared for much more compromise; and it is equally ridiculous

to deny that Cromwell was now getting very ambitious – for confidence in one's power is the first step in ambition.

Still the wearisome negotiations went on between all parties and Charles, who had no intention of accepting any terms but his own. The soldiers even offered full religious freedom for all Christian sects – except Roman Catholics – which seems an amazing concession from men who had fought a war mainly, so they said, because they could not tolerate bishops. Now Charles might have his bishops, for all they cared. It was all very illogical, and tended to show that the Puritan army was not so firm in its religious convictions as it professed. Even the precise virtues of Independence were so vague that one soldier had declared that: 'If I should worship the sun or moon, like the Persians, or that pewter pot on the table, nobody has anything to do with it.' Which may have been complete Independency, yet was not exactly what Cromwell and his Semitic God meant by the term.

It is little wonder that negotiations did not proceed far on such a shifting basis. Charles was delightfully frank and told Ireton: 'I shall play my game as well I can.' To which Ireton replied: 'If your majesty have a *game* to play, you must give us also the liberty to play ours.' Cromwell and Ireton were at this time still working together for a settlement with the king; however, it is clear they were getting disheartened, and, when they persuaded the Army Council to make some concessions to Charles, they had to fight officers like Marten and Rainsborough, who wanted to ignore the king altogether.

The more Cromwell tried to be moderate and sensible

the more the extremists naturally accused him of being a traitor. Berkeley the royalist reported that: 'Amongst these Agitators there were many ill-wishers of Cromwell, looking on him as one who always takes his advantages out of the Army.' Berkeley also said that Cromwell and his son-in-law, Ireton, and their friends 'governed the Council of War absolutely,' but that they had only a partial control of the general Army Council, where the Agitators had the majority in their hands.

The situation was thus developing. Cromwell almost entirely dominated Fairfax, but he could not yet control the greater forces of discontent in the Army represented by the Agitators, and all the wild, sentimental thinkers, and the rogues who always gather together in moments of disorder. Even as early as August 10th an extremist Independent member of the Commons had declared: 'It is high time for us to betake ourselves to the strongest power and the longest sword.

It is almost impossible to find any logical order in Cromwell's mind at this moment. He was closely in touch with Charles, begging him to refuse the Parliamentarian terms as expressed in the Propositions of Newcastle; yet, as Charles very smartly pointed out to him, Cromwell had not voted against them in the House of Commons. Ireton, indeed, went so far as to send a message to his king that the army 'would purge and purge and purge, and never leave purging the Houses until they had made them of such a temper as to do his Majesty's business; and rather than they should fall short of what was promised, he would join with French, Spaniard, Cavalier, or any other that would

join with him to force it.' It is little wonder the soldiers grew suspicious of Cromwell and his intimate friends. After these few years of civil war only a simpleton believed any longer in honesty in public affairs.

In September a Major White was ejected from the Council of the Army because he had declared that there was 'now no visible authority in the kingdom but the power and force of the sword'; and Cromwell was one of his most stern judges. It was indeed a case of Satan rebuking sin; for Cromwell's public life had been in the main, a practical proof of White's theory. One can only suspect that Cromwell disliked all force which he did not control himself – which plain men might too hastily conclude was the hypocrisy of a tyrant. But Cromwell's mind was too subtle a thing for such a crude judgment; and, when he announced that he did not desire 'to cast down the foundation of Presbytery and set up Independency,' those who had been watching and listening to him for the last few years, might easily put him down as a liar.

Then Colonel Rainsborough, who was one of those dull-witted people who think they can bring heaven down to earth by a few new, carelessly drafted, radical laws, announced he could tolerate the compromising Cromwell no longer, and that all negotiations with the king must end. Whereupon the situation became still more confusing when 4000 private soldiers presented a petition desiring reconciliation with Charles. Berkeley declared that at the end of September Cromwell was still fighting hard for a reasonable settlement with the king. It may have been to get support for his compromise that he apparently tried to raise the fear

of anarchy, by declaring that 'there was a party in the army labouring for the king, and that a great one; now the City was endeavouring to get another party in the army; and that there was a third party . . . little dreamt of, endeavouring to have no other power to rule but the sword.'

The result of all these vigorous negotiations for peace was – more strife. At a general council of officers at Putney, at the end of October, with Cromwell presiding, we find him still trying to escape hard facts in a maze of vague words: 'amongst us we are almost all soldiers; . . . all words of courage animate us to carry on our business, to do God's business, that which is the will of God. I do not think that any man here wants courage to do that which becomes an honest man and an Englishman to do . . . men that may not resolve to do that which we do in the power of a fleshy strength.' And so on, and so on. On November 1st, Cromwell, at another Army Council, continued to protect the king – probably because he thought the king could best protect him: 'I think the King is King by contract, and I shall say as Christ said "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone" . . . considering that we are in our own actions failing in many particulars, I think there is much necessity of pardoning of transgressors.' This was Cromwell in one of his moments of humble sanity. Then pious Lieutenant-General Goffe announced that 'it seems to me clear that a voice from heaven has told us that we have sinned against the Lord by tampering with his enemies. I desire that we may wait upon God and see if he hath not spoken to us.' To whom Cromwell replied somewhat tartly: 'I shall not be

unwilling to hear God speaking; but I think that God may be heard speaking in that which is to be read as otherwise.' He then made a remarkable declaration of his own position with regard to the divine voice: 'it is left to me to judge for my own satisfaction, and the satisfaction of others, whether it be the Lord or not.' This is a distinct advance on the road to power. We have seen evidences that Cromwell had by this time decided to disregard the advice of Fairfax, his military chief; and he now announced his right to decide what are the orders of God. It was a convenient religion for a man of worldly affairs.

It was Cromwell who had taken such a warm part in stirring up fanatical religious strife; so he had himself to blame when the settlement was hung up by a bitter squabble as to whether Selden was right when he argued that Catholics were Christians, and therefore entitled to toleration. This gave time for the extremists to grow more extreme; until Cromwell, who may once have prided himself on being an 'advanced' man, found himself surrounded by a lot of chattering fanatics who had the intellectual values of the monkey-houses at the zoological gardens. We even have the amazing phenomenon of October 20th, when Cromwell spoke for three hours in explaining to the Commons that the great object of the army all along had been to strengthen Charles, and that the sooner they restored him to power the better.

It would be possible to fill volumes with the endless arguments and negotiations and attempted compromises of this period; but they grow a little wearisome, and the reader of their history will be glad when Charles, on

November 11th, closed the chapter by getting on his horse and galloping to the Isle of Wight. He was well advised, for on that same day Colonel Harrison at an army committee had declared that Charles was a man of blood and should die. In answer to which demand Cromwell gave proof from the Old Testament that it was sometimes wiser to allow the murderer to escape, which was very typical of him. But with the king's escape, another chapter of the Puritan Revolution had ended.

CHAPTER X

THE SECOND CIVIL WAR

The flight of Charles compelled Cromwell to make a change in his tactics, if not in his principles. For it was impossible any longer to believe, or to pretend, that Charles was anxious to come to terms. The contemporary gossip was that Cromwell had himself frightened the king into flight in order to have the field clearer for his own ambitions. But there is no documentary evidence, and it was a very risky act. For the moment Cromwell was in grave danger of being shot by the soldiers as a traitor to the army, which Rainsborough threatened to do. There is some evidence that the Levellers were plotting to murder him, after which they are said to have intended to cut the throats of any member of parliament who would not bring the king to trial. The army was on the verge of mutiny, but, as we have already seen, the number of soldiers who had very earnest political principles was not large, and Fairfax and Cromwell stopped any serious action. It is noteworthy that Fairfax got his way by reasonable language; he threatened to resign his command, but promised that if the troops behaved, he would insist on a dissolution of the present parliament and the calling of another elected by a popular vote. Cromwell, on the other hand, got his way by riding into the rebellious ranks with his drawn sword. Three ring-

leaders were condemned to death, and one of them shot. When one examines Cromwell's life carefully in detail, it is found that he rarely got anything except by force. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that Cromwell received the thanks of the Commons for stopping the mutiny.

King Charles had now the calm self-assurance to open negotiations once more from his new prison at Carisbrooke. The army, the parliament, and the Scots, all continued to receive offers from a dull though persistent sovereign, who still continued to think he would outwit them all. The army turned its back with the curt reply that it only did as its master, the parliament, ordered – which was not without a sense of humour. Parliament simply drafted four Bills which Charles must accept at once; one of them giving parliament control of the militia for twenty years.

There now came a drastic change in Cromwell's attitude towards the king. There is a romantic story, of later date (but confirmed somewhat by contemporary evidence) that Cromwell and Ireton, disguised as troopers, seized the saddle of a messenger from the king, who was carrying (as they had been warned by a spy in the king's household), a letter revealing Charles's real intentions of coming to terms with the Scots. There is another tale that in another intercepted letter the king told his wife that he did not intend to keep his promises to any party – which was probably true.

Whichever were the reasons, the result was fairly clear. When, at the end of November, Berkeley appeared at army headquarters with the king's request for help, he reported that Cromwell 'sent me word that he durst

not see me, it being very dangerous to both; and bid me be assured that he would serve his Majesty as long as he could do it without his own ruin, but desired that I would not expect that he should perish for his sake.'

Cromwell's letter to Colonel Hammond, Charles's guardian at Carisbrooke, on January 3rd, 1648, sums up the position: 'Dear Robin, this business hath been (I trust) a mighty providence to this poor kingdom and to us all. The House of Commons is very sensible of the king's dealings, and of our brethren's in this late transaction . . . has this day voted as follows: 1st. They will make no more addresses to the King; 2nd. None shall apply to him without leave of the two Houses, upon pain of being guilty of high treason; 3rd. They will receive nothing from the King, nor shall any other bring anything to them from him, nor receive anything from the King.' Cromwell's own words in this debate had been: 'It was now expected that Parliament should govern and defend the kingdom by their own power, and not teach the people any longer to expect safety and government from an obstinate man whose heart God had hardened.' Clarendon, writing of this incident, says that Cromwell, as his reason for this change of policy, declared that the king had made 'secret treaties with the Scotch commissioners how he might embroil the nation in a new war, and destroy the Parliament.' In other words, both the parliament and the army were now convinced that Charles would not grant them their terms: so it was useless negotiating any longer.

They were soon to know with certainty the reason for Charles's obstinacy. He had indeed come to terms

with the Scots. But without this knowledge that they were soon to be invaded by a Scottish army, Charles's blatant intrigues and lies had gone too far. Rainsborough, the extremist, and his friends were ready to support Cromwell now that he also was tired of the king's deceptions. The sign of the soldiers' unity was a prayer-meeting at Windsor at which, says Professor Gardiner: 'many of the officers, including Cromwell and Ireton, prayed fervently from nine in the morning to seven at night.' They were clearly working up to that hysterical fanaticism which is usually the forerunner of war. A few days later Cromwell dined with the parliamentary commissioners, who had come on a visit to the army headquarters, when the unity 'was sweet and comfortable, the whole matter of the kingdom being left to Parliament.'

But the army and the parliament, both together, only represented a small, insignificant minority of politicians and religious and social cranks. The plain man in the street, at Canterbury, for one example out of many places, was shouting 'Up with King Charles and down with Parliament and Excise'; for the somewhat domestic reason that the Puritans had suppressed the Christmas festivities. In truth, the English were already sick of rule by fanatics and soldiers, and if the army had been disbanded the Puritan Revolution would have disappeared like smoke. But in spite of all obvious formal appearances to the contrary, Oliver Cromwell and his army could now do very much what they pleased, even when they professed to parliament that they would obey its commands.

Cromwell was first and foremost a soldier, and the

danger of a Scottish invasion was now his immediate dread. To save England in general, and himself and his political theories in particular, from this danger from the Scots, Cromwell was prepared to put Charles's son on the throne, and even began negotiating with the much-hated queen on these lines. Little wonder that the republicans, Marten and young Vane, began to think they could trust this hopeless intriguer no longer. Then Cromwell gathered together the leaders of both parties; and was so conciliatory – or vacillating – as to tell them that it was a mere matter of expediency, or 'according as Providence should direct us,' whether they had a monarchy or an oligarchy or a democracy.

In short, the onlookers were justified in saying that Cromwell had no principles whatsoever. Clarendon, writing of this period in his life, with his usual fairness and balanced judgment, has got as near Cromwell's psychology as it seems likely that any can reach, and he put it thus: 'Cromwell and the few others with whom he consulted, first considered what was necessary to their main and determined end, and then, whether it was right or wrong, to make all other means subservient to it; to cozen and deceive men, so long as they could induce them to contribute to what they desired, upon motives how foreign whatsoever; and when they would keep company with them no longer, or further serve their purposes, to compel them by force to submit to what they could not be able to oppose.

It is a philosophy of life and of diplomacy which does not fit into the orthodox creed of Puritanism as popularly accepted. It was, nevertheless, the Cromwellian philosophy if the whole practice of his life is any

evidence. It is not the view which Carlyle, the modern man of letters, built out of a glowing imagination and a fluent pen; but it was the deliberate view of a contemporary man of affairs who rarely lost his head in practical life, and never allowed his prose to become hysterical. Clarendon goes on with another invaluable hint of the mental quality of Cromwell, who: 'though the greatest dissembler living, always made his hypocrisy of singular use and benefit to himself; and never did anything, how ungracious or imprudent soever it seemed to be, but what was neccessary to the design.' In short, the rather rough countryman had turned out to be the cleverest manipulator of men that England was inflicted with at this period; and since he was also – very unexpectedly – the greatest leader of cavalry, the combination of these qualities was making him every day more supreme in the state.

As we have continually seen, when intrigues and twistings and turnings of policy and practice availed no longer, Cromwell was always ready to use his final and most instinctive card – force. It was at a heated debate during this crisis that he closed the argument by throwing a cushion at Ludlow, and then bolted downstairs, pursued by Ludlow with another cushion. Cromwell was driving the emotional Lilburne giddy by his continual mental turnings, for in January Lilburne accused him of high treason – which, in his mouth, meant treason to the people. But the political oligarchy was apparently satisfied with Cromwell, for, in March 1648 parliament made him a present of another landed estate as a further reward for his services, in addition to the £2500 per annum he had

been granted in 1646, all of which he had not received. The sequel may be told in Cromwell's own words in a letter to the Committee of Irish Affairs, written March 21st, 1648: 'The two Houses of Parliament having lately bestowed £1680 *per annum* upon me and my heirs, out of the Earl of Worcester's Estates; the necessity of affairs requiring assistance, I do hereby offer one-thousand pounds annually to be paid out of the rents . . . for the space of five years, if the war in Ireland shall so long continue, or that I live so long: to be employed for the service of Ireland, as the parliament shall please to appoint; provided the said yearly rent become not to be suspended by war or other accident.' He then releases the State from the payment of £1500 which was still due to him for his service under Manchester, also about two years' arrears of pay as governor of Ely.

How far Cromwell made this sacrifice willingly, or whether he did it to save himself from his numberless critics, will remain a mystery in the depth of his elusive mind. If Cromwell had the tender conscience from which he would have us believe he suffered, he must have felt very unhappy when he considered the company of men who were assisting him to fight the king. The facts are so opposed to the fictions of orthodox text-books that it may be better to sum them up in the authoritative language of Gardiner: 'The Royalists took pleasure in drawing up lists of members of either House who had derived pecuniary advantages from the civil war . . . there can be little doubt that in many cases the rewards were higher than the services justified. . . . Many of those who had seats in the House of Commons found

a ready way of enriching themselves by the sale of the influence which every member of parliament then possessed.'

It is an interesting glimpse into the peculiar mind of this great man that at this time, one of the most critical moments of his life, he began a long and intricate correspondence with his friend, Colonel Norton, and a Mr. Mayor, concerning the marriage settlement of Richard Cromwell and Mayor's daughter. Oliver haggled over this, like a trader in an Oriental bazaar. The correspondence reached its climax in the first half of 1649, when he had just beheaded the king, and still had Ireland to conquer. In April he was writing of 'my lands in Glamorganshire being but little above £400 *per annum;* and the £400 *per annum* out of my manors in Gloucester and Monmouthshire' – with quite the mediæval regal touch. On the other hand, there is the simplicity of the man revealed in his contentment, at this moment of his power, that his eldest son should marry the daughter of a quiet country gentleman.

But let no one be hard on Cromwell for his modest rewards. They were only what so many others were taking without a blush. Thus, on April 6th, 1648, Cromwell writes to 'dear Robin' Hammond, who had resisted the temptation to allow Charles to escape from Carisbrook to France: 'Your business is done in the House; your £10 by the week is made £20; £1000 given you; and Order to Mr. Lisle to draw up an Ordinance for £500 *per annum* to be settled on you and your heirs. This was done with smoothness your friends were not wanting to you . . . the Lord direct and sustain thee.' By such mundane methods did Cromwell

keep England faithful to the cause of the Puritan Revolution. And almost at the same moment the London mob was announcing that it would chop Hammond into pieces if it got the chance. It was well that the Puritan had a solemn face, else it might have sometimes been tempted to twitch into ironic merriment.

The next crisis came in the form of a royalist revolt in Wales in March 1648, followed in April by the certain news of an invasion of England by the Scottish army. But the royalists of Wales were only a fragment of the discontent that was flaring up everywhere against the Parliamentary party and its army. At the end of March London was full of bonfires in honour of Charles. There were petitions from Essex, Surrey and Kent asking that the army should be disbanded and terms made with the king. On April 9th Cromwell had to lead his cavalry against the people who were advancing to the Houses of Parliament, and shouting: 'Now for King Charles.' The people, with the fickleness of the mob, had clearly forgotten that Cromwell and his soldiers were engaged maintaining popular liberty; so ungrateful were they, and so confusing had the issue become.

Fairfax sent Cromwell to crush the royalists in Wales; and then himself had to go with another army to crush Kent and Essex, and there were smaller risings all over England. It was not really a difficult task for the disciplined regular army of the Puritans to scatter the irregular royalists. On June 28th, 1648, Cromwell, having Pembroke Castle within his grip, wrote to Fairfax with that theological rhetoric that was the inevitable result of a victory in the field, which he

always read as an approving message from the Lord: 'The Country, since we sat down before this place have made two or three insurrections, and are ready to do it every day. . . . I rejoice much to hear of the blessing of God upon your Excellency's endeavours. I pray God teach this nation, and those that are over us, and your Excellency and all of us that are under you, what the mind of God may be in all this, and what our duty is. Surely it is not that the poor godly people of this kingdom should still be made the object of wrath and anger . . . for these things which have lately come to pass have been the wonderful works of God; breaking the rod of the oppressor, . . . not with garments much rolled in blood, but by the terror of the Lord, who will yet save this people and confound his enemies.'

On July 10th Holland's rising round London was crushed; on July 11th Cromwell starved Pembroke into surrender. Fairfax did not make Colchester surrender until August 28th. But greater things were done by Cromwell in the north. On July 8th the Duke of Hamilton led the Scottish army (10,000 strong, soon increased to more than double that number) over the English border; and Lambert, the Parliamentary general, with his small force was obliged to fall back before him. Here was the real danger; for the easy crushing of all the English royalists' revolts against the Puritans had proved conclusively that the normal Englishman was so indifferent about the theories and practices of constitutional law that he had no intention of risking his life for a king whom he had rarely seen, and about whose tyranny he had little knowledge. He was content

to allow the fanatics and the mercenaries and the adventurers to fight it out between themselves. There were exceptions, of course: thus, Devon and Cornwall showed serious symptoms of unrest.

But the Scots were another matter. They were aliens, and, what was more dangerous, they were barbarians and fanatics of a worse kind than England could produce. The intelligent Englishman was generally pleased to see the Scots beaten, for he did not want to be pillaged, or massacred to please the blood-lust of Presbyterian ministers, who had driven their reluctant soldiers to kill their prisoners (men, women, and infants), in cold blood after the Battle of Philiphaugh in 1645, and in Kintyre in 1647.

Cromwell rushed to meet Hamilton's advancing army as soon as the surrender of Pembroke released him. His men had not received their pay for months, but there was no plundering under Cromwell's stern discipline. When he joined Lambert, together they could scarcely muster 9000. But Hamilton's 24,000 were a wandering horde, in a long, straggling line, so Cromwell boldly threw his army between Hamilton and his retreat to Scotland, and then fiercely attacked Langdale's division of English royalists, who were lying near Preston. As usual, Cromwell had to deal with fools in command and brave men in the ranks. But he had to use, in this case, more than the skill usually demanded of him in fighting royalists, and this military genius he showed by the clever co-operation between his foot and his horse. The battle began on August 17th, 1648, and went on in a fierce pursuit of the foe, dislodged from Preston, until Hamilton surrendered on August 25th.

His army had been annihilated. Cromwell described it all to the Speaker of the Commons in a vivid letter, which shows the terse, clear-cut reality of his mind when he was faced with the worldly problem of a field of battle. He had driven his own army to the exhaustion point: 'The Duke is marching with his remaining Horse which are about three-thousand, towards Namptwich, where the gentlemen of the county have taken about five-hundred of them.' Note that even the gentlemen of England will rise against Scottish invaders. Cromwell goes on: 'If I had a thousand horse that could but trot thirty miles, I should not doubt but to give a very good account of them, but truly we are so harassed and haggled out in this business, that we are not able to do more than walk an easy pace after them.'

So far Cromwell writes as the realist soldier. But he has just won a tremendous victory, and he reminds himself that this is one more proof that he is the agent of God, so be begins to see visions: 'Surely, Sir, this is nothing but the hand of God, and wherever anything in this world is exalted, God will pull it down. . . . It is not fit for me to give advice, nor to say a word what use should be made of this, more than to pray you that they and all that acknowledge God would exalt Him, and not hate His people who are as the apple of His Eye, and for whom even Kings shall be reproved; and that you should take courage to do the work of the Lord, in fulfilling the end of your magistracy . . . and they that are implacable . . . may speedily be destroyed out of the land.'

It was Cromwell's usual manner to pretend that it was not his business to talk politics after a battle, yet

he always gave his advice, as in this case, with a clearness that almost amounted to a threat. Tempers were getting exceedingly hot, and wills were becoming very stubborn. Mrs. Hutchinson's *Memoirs*, in writing of this period of the Battle of Preston, become more harsh in their note. Concerning the battle itself there is the episode of the death of Colonel Thornhagh, telling how, after he was killed in fair fighting, his men: 'enraged for the loss of their dear colonel, fought not that day like men of human race, but, deaf to the cries of every coward that asked mercy, they killed all . . . said the whole kingdom of Scotland was too mean a sacrifice for that brave man' – who had died as a true Puritan, murmuring: 'I have the favour from God to see my blood avenged.' He was a man after Cromwell's own savage Semitic tribesman's heart.

The Hutchinson *Memoirs* are very bitter on civil affairs: 'At London things were in a sad posture, the two factions of presbytery and independency being so engaged to suppress each other, that they both ceased to regard the public interest; in so much, that at that time a certain sort of public-spirited men stood up in the parliament and the army declaring against these factions and the ambitions of the grandees of both.' The writer goes on to explain that members of parliament were committing illegal acts, and 'many got shelter in the House and army against their debts.' The people who dared to protest against these injustices were nicknamed 'Levellers,' who (it is explained) were not the wild extremists who afterwards got that name. The sober Levellers were protected by Colonel Hutchinson, and it was these 'who first began to discover the ambition

of Lieutenant-general Cromwell and his idolaters and to suspect and dislike it.' It appeared that when Cromwell set out north to fight Hamilton at Preston, the Levellers had gone to bid him good-bye; when they 'received such professions from him, of a spirit bent to pursue the same just and honest things which they desired, that they went away with great satisfaction, till they heard that a coachful of Presbyterian priests coming after them, went away no less pleased; by which it was apparent he dissembled with one or the other, and by so doing lost his credit with both.' But there the simple Mrs. Hutchinson was wrong, for it was by such methods that Cromwell was to make himself Lord Protector.

With all its transparent bias and narrow thought, it would be difficult to find a more accurate statement of the position at this moment. Cromwell had started out as a narrow bigot and had, by the strange turning of fate, got himself into a place of authority where bigotry was useless. Against his will he was being turned into a statesman who saw the good and the bad of most parties – and his embarrassment at the ordeal almost (perhaps quite) turned him into something very near a hypocrite.

For the moment Cromwell's military duties of crushing the Scots kept him in the north, out of the intrigues which were all the while twisting and twining in London and at Westminster. It is difficult to keep in mind that in spite of the annihilation of his armies Charles Stuart was still the acknowledged King of England, and the problem of the Puritan Revolution – how to govern England – was still unsolved. In the

spiritual ecstasy of God's approval at Preston, Cromwell, on September 1st, wrote to Oliver St. John, the solicitor-general, a letter which must have caused uneasy embarrassment in legal chambers, for it is almost pure emotion in a frame of wordly craft. It is so amazingly illuminating of Cromwell's mysterious mind that it must be quoted in large part. 'I can say nothing but surely the Lord our God is a great and glorious God. He only is worthy to be feared and trusted, and His appearances patiently to be waited for . . . but everything that hath breath praises the Lord. Remember my love to my dear brother H. V[ane]. I pray he make not too little, nor I too much, of outward dispensations. God preserve us all that we, in simplicity of our spirits, may patiently attend upon them; let us all not be careful what use men will make of these actings. They shall, will they, nill they, fulfil the good pleasure of God, and so shall serve our generations. Our rest we expect elsewhere that will be durable. Care we not for tomorrow, nor for anything. This Scripture has been of great stay to me: read it; Isaiah Eight 10, 11, 14; – read all the chapter.' He finishes this letter with a story, told with apparent seriousness, of a man who had died at Preston the day before the battle, prophesying the result of the fight from a handful of grass. One feels that Cromwell was almost in the mood to draft a constitution for England upon the same fragile evidence. Or rather he would have *written* to that intent, yet when it came to acting, his decision would have been made by the realist side of his brain. One also suspects that this vague, useless letter was sent to keep things in suspense until Cromwell was free to come to London

to settle affairs, as God would direct him – with a cavalry regiment, if necessary, to drive home the divine will.

Cromwell then advanced northward. He wrote to the Committee of Estates of Scotland, from Berwick, on September 16th, one of those letters which may possibly come from a genius, but certainly not from a perfectly sane man. He calls to the notice of the committee that God has already judged between them by the result of the Battle of Preston, which obvious fact 'not only yourselves, but this kingdom, you and a great part of the known world will, I trust acknowledge.' There is more than a touch of insane megalomania in the 'great part of the known world.' Then Cromwell, having spent his whole public career in appealing to the judgment of armed force, goes on – one fears without a redeeming ironic smile at the corners of his mouth: 'How dangerous a thing it is to wage an unjust war; much more to appeal to God the Righteous Judge therein. We trust He will persuade you better by this manifest token of His displeasure, lest His hand be stretched yet more against you.' Which from a man who was always appealing to God's judgment (as even in this very letter) can only be passed with the obvious comment that the priceless gift of humour would have made half the things Cromwell did and wrote entirely impossible.

As Cromwell had a finely trained army behind him, it is not surprising that God's will was quickly imposed on Scotland, especially as Hamilton had never represented the Covenanting element or the party of the ministers of the Kirk, who acknowledged Argyll as their

leader. Argyll called out his Highlanders, and, joining with the Covenanters, they made a revolution, drove out the Hamilton party, and made peace with Cromwell, who was then free to set out for London on October 7th, to settle the great constitutional problem there in dispute. There is in existence a note which he wrote on the next day, as an introduction of a Colonel Montgomery to the Speaker of the House of Commons, expressing the wish that parliament would grant Montgomery an order giving him: '2000 of the common prisoners that were of Duke Hamilton's army. You will have very good security that they shall not for the future trouble you.' In other words, as a reward for his faithful services to the English parliamentary cause, this Montgomery was to have these two thousand human parts of the spoil. As it seems to have been common knowledge that Montgomery intended to sell his slaves – which is the only appropriate term – to Catholic Spain for service in the Low Countries, one can only conclude that Cromwell's religious and humanitarian scruples were getting a little dim after his few years of public life.

With Cromwell and his troublesome officers away in the country on military duty since April 1648, it was natural that the politicians in London and Westminster should have been enjoying a freer hand. While the cat was fighting, the mice were nibbling at the cheese in all the political traps – and there were plenty of them. On September 18th they had even gone so far as to begin further serious negotiations with Charles in the Isle of Wight. It was once more a race between the army and the parliament as to which should the sooner

make terms with the king. On October 20th Ireton's regiment showed its teeth with a petition that justice should be 'done upon all criminal persons,' whether king or commoner, it was pointedly added. At root it was the same old trouble about their pay – which would vanish (without arrears even) if peace came with disbandment of the troops; and perhaps, in the case of a minority of the soldiers, they were angry because the Presbyterian Parliamentarians had declared emphatically against toleration for anyone except themselves, and had even made heresy and blasphemy capital crimes.

Anyhow, the army was angry, and not inclined for any moderate settlement with Charles. One seemingly small matter – in a period of red revolution – had aroused gravest indignation among the soldiers: the extremist Colonel Rainsborough had been murdered by the royalists on October 29th. It was a sign that men's nerves were getting very irritable, and there was little inclination to argue with one's opponents, but rather, a hasty and childish determination to knock them down.

Cromwell was still in the north with his army, and he did not arrive in London until December 6th, 1648. It is difficult to know how much he was responsible for what happened in his absence. But Ireton was his son-in-law and his intimate friend, and it is fairly safe to assume that what Ireton did, Cromwell wished to happen. Fairfax was still head of the army, but he was a gentleman and therefore unable to handle political and military adventurers with any success. Cromwell and Ireton were made of coarser stuff, and could play

their own hand in the game. During October Ireton had drafted *The Remonstrance of the Army*. The substance of it was that Charles had been a traitor to his country by endeavouring to rule like an absolute monarch, and it demanded that he and his chief supporters should be brought to justice for the blood they had shed. Then followed the usual demand that the soldiers should receive their arrears of pay. This last demand was necessary in order to get the soldiers' support – for they were not much interested in theoretical political constitutions. On November 7th to 10th, the Council of Officers held a long meeting, praying and preaching all the first day, then giving two days to consider how to get their arrears of pay, and, on the last day, considering what should be done with Charles. It is probable that Ireton here produced the draft just mentioned. Whereupon there was horror at his extreme expressions and a resolution that the king and his people should be 'knit together in a threefold cord of love.' It is one more conclusive piece of evidence that the extremists never represented anyone but themselves. Fairfax was dead against the use of further violence. Something had to be done to meet a further resolution (at an informal meeting of the officers) expressing 'their most pious and unanimous resolution for peace' between king and parliament. Then Cromwell suggested that the Levellers should meet the extreme Independents of the army in a conference, which was called; and the soldiers began by demanding that the king's head should be cut off and parliament purged of its moderate members or dissolved. Lilburne promptly replied that as a democrat he would have

nothing to do with placing absolute power in the hands of soldiers, which would be the chief result of such wild action. On November 16th the officers again offered the king terms, which were mainly biennial parliaments and the appointment of officers of state by parliament instead of at the king's unlimited discretion.

Without going in detail through these wearisome negotiations, it is more to the point to read Cromwell's letter to Fairfax, dated November 20th: 'I find a very great sense in the officers of the regiments of the sufferings and ruin of this poor kingdom, and in all of them a very great zeal to have impartial justice done upon Offenders; and I must confess I do in all, from my heart, concur with them; and I verily think and am persuaded they are things which God puts into our hearts.' Since we have just seen that officers were calling for 'cords of love,' it is possible that Cromwell may have been (perhaps unconsciously) putting desires into other men's hearts as God, he believed, was putting desires into his own.

On November 25th Cromwell wrote a long letter to Colonel Hammond, which is full of the theological rhetoric which always denoted that the writer was working up to a brain storm: 'We have not been without our share of beholding some remarkable providences, and appearances of the Lord . . . by the light of His countenance we have prevailed. . . . Dear Robin, our fleshly reasonings ensnare us.' He goes on to quote Hammond's argument that 'God hath appointed authorities among the nations to which active or passive obedience is to be yielded. This resides in England in the Parliament.' This was clearly an inconvenient

doctrine for Cromwell, who was meditating the complete overthrow of parliament, as well as of the Crown. So he begs Hammond to remember that 'Authorities and powers are the ordinance of God. This or that species is of human institution . . . all agree there are cases in which it is lawful to resist.' In other words, as soon as he could prove that anything was an 'ordinance of God' it would be easy to overrule it – for, as we have already seen, Cromwell believed himself the mouthpiece of God and His chosen agent. Therefore he goes on: 'My dear friend, let us look unto providences; surely they mean something. They hang so together; have been so constant, so clear and unclouded. Malice, sworn malice against God's people, now called Saints, to root out their name; and yet they, by providence, having arms, and therein blessed with defence and more. . . . What think you of Providence disposing the hearts of so many of God's people this way, especially in this poor Army, wherein the great God has vouchsafed to appear.' All this outburst was because parliament was again trying to come to terms with Charles by a treaty of Newport, which Cromwell here describes as 'this ruining hypocritical agreement.' He had now convinced himself that the army was the agent of the divine will – which, in practical politics, came to waiting until he had the power to enforce his own will (which was God's will) on the nation.

Charles was taken out of Carisbrooke, from the hands of men like Hammond, who was prepared to reason and compromise, and was taken to Hurst Castle by the orders of Fairfax, who, next day, December 2nd, marched into London and Westminster with his army.

On December 6th Colonel Pride with his musketeers posted himself at the door of the House of Commons, and kept out any member who was considered a supporter of further negotiations with the king: forty-five being arrested for resisting Pride's orders, and ninety-six others going away without resistance. When Cromwell arrived that evening in London, after his long absence with the army, and took his seat in the Commons next day, he found only about fifty members left. They promptly voted him their thanks for his glorious victories. Cromwell pretended that he knew nothing of the action of the previous day in expelling the moderate members, yet added: 'since it was done he was glad of it.' Probably no one in the House believed his denial, but they knew that they were in the presence of their real master.

No one can blame Cromwell or anyone else for being unwilling to continue further negotiations with the dishonest Charles. It was impossible to bargain with a man who had no intention of keeping his word; but then it is only fair to add that it was equally unreasonable to expect Charles to negotiate with such a man as Cromwell, who believed that all his wishes were the commands of God. Besides, Charles had plenty of reasons for suspecting that the men who wanted to dethrone him were not thinking merely of the nation's good. The day after Cromwell's reappearance in London, Fairfax, speaking for the army, demanded £40,000 from the city authorities, and, when refused, the soldiers seized over half of that sum by force. Between a lying king and a freebooting army there was ample reason why sane and honest men should hesitate.

Cromwell himself was going through one of those periods when he was wrestling with his soul. There now came one more of those tremendous struggles in his mind between intellect and emotion, between statesmanship and wild passion.

As usually happened, passion won – for Cromwell had more emotion than intellect. The king was in his possession, but the glimmering remains of his reason told him that it was folly to kill him. So he apparently made efforts to come to a compromise even at this late hour. A royal agent wrote, on December 21st, that it was only the smaller men of the extremist party who desired the king's death, while 'Cromwell is retreating from them, his designs and theirs being as incompatible as fire and water, they desiring only a pure democracy and himself but an oligarchy.' Cromwell had an interview with some of the most moderate leaders on December 18th, and again on the two following days. On the 25th he begged the Council of Officers not to execute the king, and they all agreed except six or so. But Charles remained a fool – or a brave man of principles – and refused any compromise, and on the 27th the same officers were all against him once more.

Wise men could still have made reasonable terms, but the Puritan Rebellion had left England under the chaotic rule of unbalanced men. On December 29th parliament – or the fragment of it that the army leaders allowed to sit – passed a resolution constituting a Court wherein the king should be tried for treason. Cromwell, as usual, explained that he was only acting thus: 'since the Providence of God hath cast this upon us, I cannot but submit to Providence, though I am

not yet provided to give you advice.' Which sober readers will judge to be the speech of a man who was in a tumult of indecision, or worse.

The trial of Charles I. is a subject of the general history of England. Since it was only the demand of a group of extremists there was a difficulty in getting judges to sit in the Court. Whereupon Cromwell, as in the urgent crises of battles began to 'see red,' and raged: 'I tell you we will cut off his head with the crown upon it.' Bishop Burnet considered that Ireton was the driving force behind the trial, while Cromwell was still hesitating. Fairfax refused to appear after the first sitting, and a word from Cromwell (with Fairfax to support him) would have crushed the extremists. But Cromwell had once more made up his mind that he was performing the judgment of God.

There was one most significant moment in the trial which revealed more than any number of documents. When Bradshaw, the president of the Court, made the formal charge against Charles, he said it was 'in the behalf of the Commons assembled in Parliament and the good people of England.' To which preposterous falsehood, the voice of the brave Lady Fairfax replied from the gallery: 'It is a lie; not half, nor a quarter of the people of England. Oliver Cromwell is a traitor.' The most conclusive proof of the truth of those words came at the very moment they re-echoed through the Court: for when Colonel Axtell, the commander of the guard in Court, losing his head (after the manner of emotional fanatics), ordered his men to open fire on the gallery, they ignored his folly and remained passive. It was not the common soldiers of England who had

lost their heads and their sense of law and order, but only their unbalanced officers. It is the manner of whirling revolutions to throw up the giddy heads to the top.

Cromwell was the third to sign the sentence of death. It was not without difficulty that enough signatures could be obtained. Clarendon says that Cromwell made Ingoldsby sign by force 'with a loud laughter'; and there is other evidence that Cromwell was suffering from something not far short of hysteria at this moment of crisis. For the State Trials report that he inked Marten's face as they were both standing beside the death warrant. The medical expert will not neglect the evidence of this abnormal conduct at such a moment.

With the death scene we are not concerned here, except to note that it required two troops of soldiers to drive away the indignant spectators. One thing at least is clear in Cromwell's often mysterious career: he was only able to order this execution because he had a sternly disciplined army to protect him from the people. The beheading of Charles Stuart was the most characteristic act of Oliver Cromwell's life, which was the expression of a burning belief that he was divinely inspired to use force against anyone who did not agree with him. That was a purely personal opinion which is scarcely worth the name of philosophy or social science.

In the eighteenth century the poet Pope told a strange story, which he seems to have received (through one intermediary only) from Lord Southampton, who said he was himself present when the event happened. Gardiner accepts the tradition as being worthy of acceptance. It appears that Southampton had been

allowed to sit beside Charles's body in the Banqueting House during the night following the execution. About two in the morning he (and a friend watching with him) saw a man enter the room, with a cloak concealing his face. The unknown man stood in silence beside the king's body for some time, then turned away murmuring the words: 'Cruel necessity.' Southampton admitted he could not see the face, but the voice and peculiar movements convinced him it was Cromwell. It is certainly impossible to imagine two words that could be more characteristic of the man as he emerges from all the evidence he has elsewhere left for our judgment. Cromwell, in that saner mind which was buried so deep beneath the many layers of the chaotic mind on the surface, probably already knew he had made a grave mistake in killing Charles. Now he was trying to sooth his overstrung nerves by facing the corpse of his blunder, striving to convince himself that he had been offered no alternative. It was one more example of Cromwell's inability to grasp the facts with his sadly limited intelligence. He had Charles within his power, and if he had proposed reasonable terms, the national instinct would have seen that they were obeyed. But it was necessary that they should be the terms of a reasonable compromise and not the demands of fanatics and cranks – and the civil war had been the work of such-like men. When the muffled figure sighed in anguish and doubt before Charles's body, the 'necessity' of which he moaned was the judgment of a mind that saw life as a very distorted image, and his misformed soul had produced a chaos instead of a settlement. Necessity to Cromwell was that which would satisfy

his own short-sighted desires, but the wishes of a fanatic were not the will of England. An experienced solicitor could have drawn up a reasonable settlement between Charles and his people – even though the king was so much of a fool and so great a deceiver. Whereas Cromwell, being mainly a prejudiced person, without wide experience of the world, was driven by 'cruel necessity' to an act of destruction which failed – as always in history – to bring any peace.

CHAPTER XI

THE COMMONWEALTH IN ARMS

Having finally beaten Charles Stuart into the earth, the army had now to do the much more difficult work of defending itself against the various groups and ambitious persons who desired to share the powers and spoils of government. The chief rivals for power, at the moment, were the army, now of 44,000 men, and the Rump Parliament, of about seventy members, all that was left of the Long Parliament since the soldiers had driven the rest away by force. Generally speaking, the whole of England hated the army and its leaders.

For the next week after Charles's execution, Cromwell appears to have been of a compromising mind again – his brain storm had subsided. He was much wrapped up in his negotiations for the marriage of his son Richard with Dorothy Mayor, and the marriage settlement which would affect the manors that had come to him as a reward for military services. There was also the urgent necessity of setting up some kind of a political constitution to take the place of the one that had been destroyed.

Cromwell appears to have even voted for retaining the House of Lords, at least as an advising chamber. But all these matters are of little interest when it is remembered that the whole constitution was a sham façade behind which the army leaders were supreme.

It was Ireton who appeared more prominently in this constitution making; but Cromwell's was the hand that held the blunderbuss.

The first event which brought him out in his full vigour was a revolt of some regiments that had been won over by the Levellers. Lilburne had been foolish enough to imagine that the leaders of the Puritan Rebellion were desirous of founding a democratic state. The soldiers were ripe for mutiny for their pay was still in arrear, and they were not anxious to do any more fighting in Ireland until they saw a hope of handling their wages. So Lilburne preached democracy to ready ears.

Lilburne the idealist had now a profound contempt for Cromwell as a compromiser and a hypocrite, for he said: 'You can scarce speak to Cromwell but he will lay his hand to his breast, elevate his eyes and call God to record. He will weep, howl and repent, even while he doth smite you under the fifth rib.' Lilburne was only a rebel of a fairly timid sort, who wanted some constitutional changes which would probably not have damaged anybody very seriously. But behind him were more alarming persons who wanted to give the land to the people, who might dig it for their own maintenance; therefore the men in possession considered that the whole levelling movement must be stopped. So when Lilburne was tried for inciting to riot Cromwell knew his own mind very decidedly: 'I tell you you have no other way to deal with these men but to break them, or they will break you, yea, and bring all the guilt of the blood and treasure shed and spent in this kingdom upon your heads and shoulders, and frustrate

and make void all that work that with so many years' industry, toil and pains you have done, and so render you to all rational men in the world as the most contemptiblest generation of silly, low-spirited men in the earth, to be broken and routed by such a despicable, contemptible generation of men as they are.' Lilburne had just told the Council (with marked emphasis against Cromwell): 'I have not found so much honour, honesty, justice, or conscience in any of the principal officers of the army as to trust my life under their protection, or to think it can be safe under their immediate fingers.'

Milton was asked to write a reply to Lilburne, but did not see his way clear with any convincing argument. However, if poets with consciences hesitated, soldiers with arms did not. Their answer to the agitator was to shoot the men who took his advice; and here Cromwell was in his element. In April there was a mutiny in the City of London, where a regiment could not get its pay and refused to go to Ireland until it was paid. Fairfax accompanied Cromwell to the barracks, and Lockyer, one of the most respected and bravest of the soldiers, the pride of his regiment, was shot in front of St. Paul's Cathedral. Cromwell chose the right man for death, for he was a genuine democrat, and wanted much more than his pay. Such men would have ruined the chance of ambitious self-seekers. In May there was another mutiny at Salisbury, this time a refusal to go to Ireland until English liberties were made safe. Cromwell first paraded his men in Hyde Park, telling them parliament was really going to pay their arrears and then dissolve itself to make way for a representative assembly – which he probably knew was altogether unlikely – and then

Fairfax and he set out to crush the mutiny. Fairfax ordered him to hit the rebels hard when he found them at Burford, and the three leaders were shot in the churchyard next morning.

Three days later Fairfax and Cromwell were made Doctors of Civil Law at Oxford – presumably because they had almost abolished civil law, and done their best to revert to the fighting habits of savages. The victory was now to the men who hit hardest against their opponents. The rule of force was every day more undisguised. Professor Gardiner, thus sums up the position at this moment: 'Step by step, the Government of the Commonwealth was compelled to accommodate itself to its true position, and to rule by means which everyone of its members would have condemned if they had been employed by Charles or Strafford.'

Their situation was so dangerous that every word of criticism must be hushed. The defenders of liberty even began to prosecute the printers of a translation of the Koran, detecting the possibility of sedition or heresy therein. But the real danger was Ireland. If the royalists and Catholics won there, the result might be an invasion of England by an Irish army. The government asked Cromwell to go to Ireland as commander-in-chief of an English army, and, in reply, he made a long speech, which was his usual subtle blend of religious emotion with a shrewd worldly desire to get plenty of money to provide for the necessities of God's army. He said: 'It matters not who is our Commander-in-chief if God be so'; nevertheless he finished by the more practical proposal 'that the army do move for such provisions as may be fit for honest men to ask';

and before he left on his heavenly mission he had been promised £13,000 a year for his salary as lord-lieutenant and commander-in-chief combined, while he was to have an army of 12,000 men; all which must have given a much increased satisfaction and sense of security to a man who already believed himself in the hands of God. He incidentally made the interesting declaration that 'I had rather be overcome with a Cavalierish interest than a Scotch interest; I had rather be overrun by a Scotch interest than an Irish interest, and I think of all this is most dangerous.' He went on to say that if the Stuarts returned to power, it would be through Ireland or Scotland.

Cromwell landed at Dublin on August 15th, 1649, after a voyage during which (the chaplain, Hugh Peters, relates): 'the Lord Lieutenant was as sea sick as ever I saw a man in my life.' This was almost the sole occasion on which the Irish could have derived much satisfaction during the whole expedition. One of his first acts on arriving was to publish a declaration: 'Whereas, I am informed that a liberty hath been taken by the Soldiery to abuse, rob and pillage, and too often to execute cruelties upon the Country People. . . . I hereby warn and require all officers, soldiers and others under my command henceforth to forbear all such evil practices.' But seeing that his general policy almost extinguished the Irish, the above was mainly of theoretical interest.

On September 3rd he began the siege of Drogheda, one of the chief incidents of his life. He stormed it on the 10th, and the events of that storming are a living memory in Ireland to this day. 'The curse of Cromwell

on you' is still the most terrible of words on the head of a foe. The Irishman can think of nothing more hellish than what Cromwell did in the streets of Drogheda. The facts, mainly from his own words, are these.

After a week's preparation Cromwell's guns began to make a breach in the walls on September 9th, and a summons to surrender was delivered to the Governor of the town, Sir Arthur Ashton: 'to the end effusion of blood may be prevented I have thought fit to summon you to deliver this same into my hands. If this be refused you will have no cause to blame me.' The governor declined to surrender, and the next day, about five in the evening, after hard fighting, 'our men became masters both of their retrenchments and the church,' and then Cromwell was able to 'let in our own horse, though with much difficulty. The enemy retreated divers of them into the Mill-Mount: a place very strong and of difficult access. The Governor and divers considerable Officers being there, our men getting up to them, were ordered by me to put them all to the sword. And, indeed, being in the heat of action, I forbade them to spare any that were in arms in the town, and I think that night they put to the sword about 2,000 men, divers of the officers and soldiers being fled over the Bridge into the other part of the Town, where about one hundred of them possessed St. Peter's church-steeple, some the west gates, and others a strong round tower next the gates, called St. Sunday's. These being summoned to yield to mercy, refused, whereupon I ordered the steeple of St. Peter's Church to be fired, where one of them was heard to say in the midst of the flames: "God damn me,

God confound me; I burn, I burn." The next day the other two towers were summoned, in one of which was about six or seven score; but they refused.' They were starved out, Cromwell goes on to relate, and 'When they submitted, their Officers were knocked on the head, and every tenth man of the soldiers killed and the rest shipped for the Barbadoes. The soldiers in the other tower were all spared, as to their lives only, and shipped likewise to the Barbadoes.' In short, the Puritan agent of God behaved as a homicidal lunatic.

Cromwell then proceeds with his excuse for all this cold-blooded massacre: 'I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret.' He then relates with evident pride in proof of this conviction, that Dundalk and Trim at once surrendered – 'upon the news of Tredah (*i.e.* Drogheda) they ran away' – and then (still fearing the judgment of decent and sane men) Cromwell proceeds, as usual, to put the responsibility on the Almighty. 'Now give me leave to say how it comes to pass that this work is wrought. It was set upon some of our hearts that a great thing should be done, not by power or might, but by the Spirit of God. And is it not clear? That which caused your men to storm so courageously it was the Spirit of God, who gave your men courage, and took it away again, and gave the enemy courage and took it away again; and gave your men courage again, and therewith this happy success.

And therefore it is good that God alone have all the glory.'

At the first glance one can only treat such statements and opinions as one would criticise the ramblings of a child or a man of feeble intellect. But it is possible to explain Cromwell's position in a way that will make him a little more tolerable than he appears on the surface. He had come to Ireland with his unbalanced, crudely educated mind filled with the tales of Celtic atrocities that had circulated in England since the Irish rebellion of 1641. There was some basis of truth in the tales, and the Irish Catholic rebels had killed in the first two years of this rising, perhaps, 8000 Protestant colonists. But the tales said that 150,000 had been murdered within two months. Further, beyond the sheer absurdity of the larger figure – which was far greater than the affected districts possessed for their whole Protestant population – the hysterical Englishmen of the Cromwell type, being ignorant of history or even current affairs outside their own parishes, did not realise that the Irish had been goaded into rebellion during long ages of cruel treatment by their English and Scottish conquerors. In the words of the great Tory historian, Lecky: 'Behind the people lay the maddening recollection of the wars of Elizabeth, when their parents had been starved by thousands to death, when unresisting peasants, when women, when children had been deliberately massacred, and when no quarter had been given to the prisoners. Before them lay the almost certain prospect of banishment from the land which remained to them, of the extirpation of the religion which was fast becoming the passion as well as

the consolation of their lives, of the sentence of death against any priest who dared to pray beside their bed of death.' Such is the verdict of a Tory gentleman of modern culture.

The verdict of Cromwell – knowing nothing of history – was that the Irish were a savage, superstitious race that must be punished for its past sins and dragooned into submission to the Puritan creed. But there was a still darker side to Cromwell's work of conquest in Ireland. As Lecky points out: 'From the very beginning the English Parliament did the utmost in its power to give the contest the character of a war of extermination . . . enacted that 2,500,000 acres . . . should be assigned to English adventurers in consideration of small sums of money which they raised for the subjugation of Ireland. It thus gave the war a desperate agrarian character, furnished immense numbers of people in England with the strongest motives to oppose any reconciliation with the Irish, and convinced the whole body of the Irish proprietary that their land was marked out for confiscation.'

Such was the dark scheme which the Puritan parliament of England had so cleverly cloaked in the pious robes of a Protestant crusade against papist superstition – a crusade which the simple-minded Cromwell may have taken at its surface value, but which deceived very few men of normal intellect. With these few words on the history and origin of the Irish Rebellion, of which the siege of Drogheda was one of the later incidents, it is now more possible to find an explanation for another paragraph in Cromwell's report to the Speaker of the English parliament. After explaining the more

purely military movements and massacres related above, he continues: 'It is remarkable that these people (of Drogheda) at the first set up the mass in some places of the town that had been monasteries; but afterwards grew so insolent that, the last Lord's day before the storm, the Protestants were thrust out of the great Church called St. Peter's, and they had public mass there: and in this very place near one thousand of them were put to the sword, fleeing thither for safety. I believe all their friars were knocked on the head promiscuously but two: the one of which was Father Peter Taaff (brother to the Lord Taaff), whom the soldiers took the next day, and made an end off; the other was taken in the round tower, under the repute of a lieutenant, and when he understood that the officers in that tower had no quarter, he confessed he was a friar; but that did not save him.'

Some considerable space has been given to the taking of Drogheda as related in Cromwell's own words, for it was one of the most revealing moments of this man's life when he was showing his more fundamental nature, under the influence of one of his recurrent brain storms. He frankly admits that he incited his soldiers to kill their prisoners. He goes further, for the incident of the 'near one thousand' slain in St. Peter's Church almost certainly refers to civilians (see a carefully documented article by Mr. J. B. Williams in *The Nineteenth Century*, April, 1913). His childish belief that he could immediately persuade his readers to approve of the slaughter of men who had dared to attend a papist mass, is typical of Cromwell's mind.

There is the conventional argument that Cromwell

had offered terms of surrender which were refused, and that he was then entitled by the laws of war to do what he pleased. This is an argument which will appeal to lawyers, and to those who are impressed by the fantastic insolence of men who rely on the laws of force. To the normal being it will be a matter of indifference whether generals thought they had the right to kill anyone who did not surrender at the first blast of their trumpets. The common man will not regard it as a problem for courts-martial or international custom, for he knows that if mankind had followed the laws of field-marshals and admirals, the world would long ago have been reduced to ruins and graveyards. The laws of war have always been opposed to the laws of respectable people. It is interesting to compare Cromwell's action in Drogheda with what Wellington thought he had the right to do in Spain; but the plain man of Cromwell's day needed no advice on military law to convince him that decent soldiers do not 'see red' and massacre their foes in cold blood. That Cromwell's action at Drogheda shocked the conscience of all time is sufficiently proved by the bitterness of the memories it has left to this day in Ireland, and the embarrassment of those who attempt to defend him in their books.

There is one thing that must be remembered, in fairness to Cromwell. He had a certain excuse for 'seeing red' in this battle, for he had himself rushed forward to lead the storming party at the critical moment when two attacks had already been driven back. It was owing, in large measure, to his courage and vigour that the breach was finally stormed. He was no theoretical soldier; he was, indeed, always far

too ready to risk his life, when it was very precious to his army. But his savage behaviour at Drogheda cannot be excused as an accidental lapse, for he did it all over again a month later when he stormed Wexford also. Cromwell, in his report to the English parliament, pretends that he was arranging to save the town from violence, but, on the unexpected surrender of the castle the troops in the town itself ran from their walls suddenly, followed by Cromwell's troops, who, encountering resistance in the market-place, 'put all to the sword that came their way.' But had not Cromwell taught them to be merciless at Drogheda? There is, indeed, ample evidence that at Drogheda the Parliamentarian soldiers had already begun to give quarter, and only ceased to obey their human instincts when Cromwell called on them to slay. The guilt was largely on their general's own soul.

Concerning Wexford, Cromwell continued, in his report: 'I believe in all, there was lost of the enemy not many less than two thousand; and I believe not twenty of yours killed from first to last of the siege' – in itself fairly conclusive proof that it was rather a massacre than a real fight. He then said how he had intended to spare the place, 'yet God would not have it so, but by an unexpected providence, in his righteous justice, brought a just judgment upon them, causing them to become a prey to the soldier. . . . The soldiers got a very good booty in this place . . . of the former inhabitants, I believe scarce one in twenty can challenge any property in their houses. Most of them are run away, and many of them killed in their service. And it were to be wished that an honest people would come

and plant here.' Thus Cromwell was carrying out very efficiently the original Parliamentarian programme of extermination in Ireland. It was the more admirably done in that he could give that spiritual touch to his despatches which commoner – and more honest – soldiers have so often forgotten to add: 'Thus,' he ends, 'it hath pleased God to give into your hands this other mercy . . . your instruments are poor and weak, and can do nothing but through believing, and that is the gift of God also.'

It is interesting to meditate what a very different campaign Cromwell would have conducted in Ireland if he had possessed a little more human kindliness, and less of the divine mercy of God. There would, at least, have been fewer Irish corpses to mark his line of march. It would be somewhat nauseous repetition to go through the acts of the providences of God which made up Cromwell's campaign in Ireland, until he returned to England at the end of May 1650. Suffice it to say that in those few months this man had done as much immediate harm and as little permanent good as any human being could have done in the limited time. In the long declaration which he published to the Irish people he gave his views on their national affairs and his wishes thereon. It is an amazing document which the late Lord Morley, himself once Chief Secretary for Ireland, contemptuously declared, 'combines in a unique degree profound ignorance of the Irish past with a profound miscalculation of the Irish future.'

Cromwell's own version of his endeavours, as he gave them in this Declaration, would do injustice to a Madhi

riding forth on a holy war: 'If ever men were engaged in a righteous cause in the world, this will be scarce a second to it. We are come to ask an account of the innocent blood that hath been shed, and to endeavour to bring them to an account (by the blessing and presence of the Almighty, in whom alone is our hope and strength) who, by appearing in arms, seek to justify the same. We come to break the power of a company of lawless rebels, who having cast off the authority of England, and live as enemies to human society; whose principles (the world hath experience of it) are to destroy and subjugate all men not complying with them. We come (by the assistance of God) to hold faith and maintain the lustre and glory of English liberty in a nation where we have an undoubted right to do it. . . .'

Every line betrays the man puffed up with conceit, both spiritual and personal, with that intolerable disregard for the opinions of others which is the chief sign of the ignoramus. By the almost unanimous judgment of the most expert historians, Cromwell's mission to Ireland was a ghastly failure, both in military and in civil affairs. His brutal blows at Drogheda and Wexford only terrified for a short time. In the summing-up of Gardiner, Cromwell's cruelty: 'had only served to exasperate the garrisons of Duncannon, of Kilkenny and of Clonmel, and in his later movements Cromwell, always prepared to accept the teaching of events, had discovered that the way of clemency was the shortest road to conquest.' In less formal language, the bully had been taught his lesson – that decent men will always find courage enough to defy the insolent fool –

which, in his Irish period, is not too hard a definition of this blustering Puritan madman. If he had possessed any sense of humour, when Colonel Jones, his second-in-command, died, and his own soldiers were hurled back with terrible losses from the walls of Clonmel, he might have grown a little suspicious lest God was always delighted with his services; but the fanatic has a brain impervious to logic and common sense, and Cromwell gave terms to Clonmel in spite of all his bullying, without seeing that he entered the town with all the tokens of a whipped hound.

The finishing of the Irish Cromwellian settlement, as it is erroneously called, was left to Ireton, who took his father-in-law's place as Deputy of Ireland. Its details would need a series of volumes, but its result has been summed up by the late Secretary for Ireland, quoted above. Lord Morley, in his life of Cromwell, put it thus: 'What is called his settlement aggravated Irish misery to a degree that cannot be measured, and before the end of a single generation, events at Limerick and the Boyne showed how hollow and ineffectual, as well as how mischievous, the Cromwellian settlement had been. Strafford, too, had aimed at the incorporation of Ireland with England . . . but Strafford had a grasp of the complications of social conditions in Ireland to which Cromwell could not pretend.' It is one of the ironies of history that this inferior man was now the leader of the party that had cut off Strafford's head; and he was to go down in history as the reformer and defender of liberty. A theory of reform and freedom which can fit into the events of Cromwell's career in Ireland, will turn those much advertised phrases, so

glibly mouthed by political and military adventurers, into words of warning to all wise men.

There is one later picture of the Cromwellian settlement which may be mentioned here. It dates from 1655, when Oliver Cromwell was Protector in England and his son, Henry, was Deputy in Ireland. The facts are, therefore, 'Cromwellian' in a double sense. The 'reform' of Ireland was by this time well on its flourishing way. The natives of all ranks had been killed or exiled or made slaves in everything but name. The creatures of the Puritan government and army had been put in possession of their lands. The army of Cromwell's God was gathering in its spoils. It was then that Henry Cromwell the Deputy received an order from England commanding him to collect a thousand 'young Irish wenches' to be sent out to Jamaica for the use of the settlers in that newly conquered island. Henry sent this truly typical Puritan reply: 'Though we must use force in taking them up, yet it being so much for their own good and likely to be of so great advantage to the public, it is not in the least to be doubted that you may have such numbers of them as you think fit to make use of on this account.' It is doubtful whether this act of Puritan Christianity was ever accomplished; but, if it failed, it was for no lack of active desire on the part of the government. There was a long correspondence between Thurloe and Henry Cromwell on the subject, and the latter, on September 18th, 1655, wrote: 'I shall not need to repeat anything about the girls, not doubting but to answer your expectations to the full in that.' It is an interesting outburst of Puritan morality at its fullest flowering.

In May 1650 Oliver Cromwell returned to England. The formal government was still that Rump remnant of the Long Parliament which the soldiers had left as a tattered flag of English liberty after Charles's execution. The executive power was in the hands of a Council of State of forty, but seeing that thirty-one of these were members of parliament, it is a little difficult to make much distinction between the two bodies. However, the matter will only interest those persons who make a hobby of wasting their time over trivial points of constitutional law and other pastimes of the learned classes. The essential matter for the realist is that the army leaders who had executed Charles had naturally taken his place. But it is necessary to remember that Cromwell had not yet been formally recognised as supreme. He was still a mere military adventurer.

The chief embarrassment remained: what to do with this institution called a parliament? It was quite a suitable organ of government for an old-fashioned democracy, but only an inconvenience to a military dictatorship. To have asked Englishmen to select a new parliament would have made matters still worse, for England would have promptly called back the Stuarts to-morrow, had it been given a free choice, or at least it would have sent the army to do its praying and preying elsewhere. For the moment the solution of this problem was again postponed by another war; this time with Scotland. This was exceedingly lucky for Cromwell, for as long as politics could be kept on the field of battle, he remained chief minister, in practice – whatever the lawyers might care to chatter about the theory.

In March 1650 Charles II. landed in Scotland, and the military despots in London knew that they must fight him and his Scottish subjects if they were to retain their offices in Whitehall. This was the main cause of Cromwell's rise to complete supremacy. For Fairfax was a gentleman of scruples, and it did not need many of those to make an honest man uneasy as the commander of the Puritan army. So when he was asked to get ready to invade Scotland and conquer the young Charles, as he had conquered his father in England, Fairfax said 'no,' and resigned. Thus, within a month of his return from Ireland, Cromwell became, in his place, Commander-in-chief of the Commonwealth Army with orders to attack the Scots. There have been many theories as to whether Cromwell had done his best to persuade Fairfax to continue in his office. He certainly protested that he desired Fairfax to remain. Even Mrs. Hutchinson, who believed that Cromwell was a crafty hypocrite at times, says: 'To speak truth of Cromwell, whereas many said he undermined Fairfax, it is false, for in Colonel Hutchinson's presence he most effectually importuned him to keep his commission lest it should discourage the army and the people at that juncture, but could by no means prevail, although he laboured for it almost all the night with most earnest endeavours.' Ludlow was more sceptical: 'Cromwell acted the part so to the life that I really thought he wished Fairfax to go to Scotland.' But then Cromwell had just been trying to persuade Ludlow to go to Ireland as assistant to Ireton, and, as part of the persuasion, had 'talked for almost an hour upon the Hundred-and-tenth Psalm' – an indirect method of

negotiation which may have aroused Ludlow's suspicions. However Mazarin's agent also wrote that Cromwell did not wish to supplant Fairfax. In truth, there was every reason why Cromwell should be afraid that the loss of Fairfax might bring the whole tottering institution of the new Commonwealth crashing on all their heads. He was shrewd enough to see – however great his ambition may have been – that he had better bide his time, than risk a crash by premature action.

The Hutchinson *Memoirs* on this period grow quite sure of that ambition being there: 'Now had the poison of ambition so ulcerated Cromwell's heart that the effects of it became more apparent than before, and while yet Fairfax stood an empty name he was moulding the army to his mind, weeding out the godly and upright-hearted men, both officers and soldiers, and filling up their rooms with rascally turncoat cavaliers, and pitiful sottish beasts of his own alliance, and others such as would swallow all things, and make no questions for conscience' sake. Yet this he did not directly or in tumult, but by such degrees that it was unperceived by all that were not of very penetrating eyes, and those that made the loudest outcries against him lifted up their voices with such apparent envy and malice that, in that mist, they rather hid than discovered his ambitious minings.'

The *Memoirs* go on to reveal the subtle method by which Cromwell worked. It is stated that Colonel Rich and others, had, in despair of his tyranny, even plotted against his life; but when discovered and brought before the Council, he hesitated whether to prove his accusations against Cromwell or to save

himself by a false confession of being wrong. Colonel Hutchinson told him to stand firm if his accusations were true, but he withdrew his charges; and, when he and his associates were condemned, Cromwell 'became their advocate and made it his suit that they might be no further published or punished. This being permitted him, and they thus rendered contemptible to others, they became beasts and slaves to him, who knew how to serve himself by them without trusting them. . . . This generosity . . . much advanced his glory in the eyes of superficial beholders, but others saw he creeped on . . . the colonel saw through him and forbore not often to tell him what was suspected of his ambition. . . . He would receive these cautions and admonitions as the greatest demonstrations of integrity and friendship and embrace the colonel and make lying professions to him. . . . ' With every allowance for bias, it is impossible to ignore contemporary evidence of this kind, coming, as this does, from a source which was peculiarly likely to be well-informed and honest.

With unlawful ambitions or without them, Cromwell on June 28th, 1650, set out for Scotland, frantic efforts being made to convince the people and the soldiers that Fairfax had only resigned because his wife thought he needed a rest; or, as one hired preacher expressed it in a sermon at Somerset House: 'his spouse hath persuaded his weary body to take rest in her bosom.' On July 19th Cromwell was at Berwick with 16,000 men. Two days before he had written a letter to Mayor, his son Richard's father-in-law. It must be read in company with the Hutchinsons' statements. After asking after the welfare of an expected grand-

child – 'if my daughter is breeding I will excuse her writing' – and with the usual petitions to do what could be done to keep his lazy son in tolerable employment, Cromwell goes on: 'You see how I am employed I need pity. Great place and business in the world is not worth the looking after . . . I have not sought these things: truly I have been called unto them by the Lord, and therefore am not without some assurance that he will enable His poor worm and weak servant to do His will.' In view of the obvious fact that the writer had been rushing about England and Ireland for the last eight years, knocking down every one who attempted to stop him, the pedant in language will hesitate to admit that 'poor worm' was the happiest term by which to express the facts.

On August 3rd he addressed the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland in the technical language of theology which they probably would have considered very appropriate if it had been addressed to anybody else. 'Your own guilt is too much for you to hear: bring not therefore upon yourselves the blood of innocent men, deceived with pretences of King and Covenant. . . . I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken. . . . There may be a Covenant made with death and hell. I will not say yours was so. . . . I pray you to read the twenty-eighth of Isaiah from the fifth to the fifteenth verse. . . . The Lord give you and us understanding.'

Whatever the ministers and elders may have thought of the lessons from Isaiah, David Leslie, who had fought by Cromwell's side at Marston Moor, began to give his old comrade as severe a lesson in military strategy

as he ever had in his life. By skilfully manœuvring Leslie wore down the English army until, by the beginning of September, Cromwell had lost 5000 men and was finally shut up with his back to the sea, near Dunbar, with no apparent alternative between starvation and surrender or a perilous attempt to retreat along the coast to England. But the Scottish Parliamentary Committee made a fatal blunder: it ordered Leslie to leave the hills and place the Scottish army across the road to England, whereas Leslie had intended to strike at Cromwell more effectively after the latter had begun his perilous march.

Cromwell had his mystical moments, but when he examined the lines of a battlefield, he had the calm eye of a land surveyor. He had only 11,000 men to Leslie's 22,000, but he made the enemy's strength useless, for he hit at him in the midst of the Scottish new movement to the low ground, and caught him with his left cooped up in a ravine and his centre scarcely more able to move until it reached the open plain. So Cromwell, after a clever false attack on Leslie's left, hurled his men on Leslie's right, and, when that was beaten, the hemmed-in Scots of the centre and left were an easy prey. Three thousand of them were killed; there were 10,000 prisoners, and Cromwell claimed that he did not lose more than twenty men.

It was the greatest day of Cromwell's life. At Marston Moor and Naseby the Parliamentarians were vastly greater in number than their enemies. Here it was the other way; though Cromwell's army was composed of veterans, and the Scots of peasants, reluctantly

dragged from their homes. The picture of Cromwell at sunrise, inspired by the certainty of victory within his reach, chanting aloud his battle-cry: 'Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered,' urging on his men to a crushing charge – such is, perhaps, the most momentous vision this man has left on the page of history. He was first and foremost a soldier, and one who claimed to be the servant of God's will and guidance. Never did he make out so good a case for his peculiar claim as he did at Dunbar. His army seemed beyond the help of aught but a miracle – and the miracle was performed. More worldly observers probably concluded that had it not been for the scientific skill of George Monk, Cromwell's army might never have survived in Scotland until the day of Dunbar, and would even then have been defeated had it not been for Monk's careful marshalling of the English infantry in line of battle. But the history of the level-headed, honest Monk would need a volume to itself – and would make Cromwell appear, by comparison, an exceedingly lucky and somewhat ignorant and blundering fellow.

Cromwell's official despatch to parliament assumes this miraculous basis for his victory. He admits they were in a very perilous position, and for that reason he expected a miracle and believed 'that because of their numbers, because of their advantages, because of their confidence, because of our weakness, because of our strait, we were in the Mount, and in the Mount the Lord would be seen; and that he would find out a way of deliverance and salvation for us.' He then describes how the movement of the enemy down from the hills was observed by himself and his staff, and how he and

Ireton immediately saw a hope of giving successful battle – which he believed was the first move in the miracle since: 'it pleased the Lord to set this apprehension upon both our hearts at the same time.' The setting of the stage was in strict biblical form: 'The Enemy's word was, *The Covenant*. Ours *The Lord of Hosts*.' He finished his despatch in the exalted strain usual to him after victory: 'Thus you have the prospect of one of the most signal mercies God hath done for England and His people. . . . It is easy to say the Lord hath done this. . . . Sir, it is in your hands, and by these eminent mercies God puts it more in your hands to give glory to Him. . . .'

It is very typical of Cromwell that on every occasion of a military triumph, he always closed his despatch by pointing out what use he desired the politicians should make of the soldiers' success. Victory in the field was not an end in itself with him; he had further purposes in his mind. And here again he gives hints of what he is after: 'Disown yourself but own your authority, and improve it to curb the proud and the insolent, such as would disturb the tranquillity of England, though under what specious pretences soever; relieve the oppressed, hear the groans of poor prisoners in England; be pleased to reform the abuses of all professions; and if there be any one that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a Commonwealth. If He that strengthens your servants to fight, pleases to give your hearts to set upon these things in order to His glory, and the glory of your Commonwealth, besides the benefit that England shall feel thereby, you shall shine forth to other nations, who shall emulate

the glory of such a pattern, and through the power of God turn into the like. These are our desires; and that you may have liberty and opportunity to do these things and not be hindered, we have been and shall be (by God's assistance) willing to venture our lives. . . .'

This is a most typical example of Cromwell's mind. It was a whirling mass of good intentions, and kindly emotions, full of an enthusiastic desire to improve the lot of the poor and unfortunate. But like many men of this oratorical type, there is no sign that he had any clear plan for putting what he wanted into practical laws and regulations. There have been many well-intentioned statesmen in the course of the world's story, but history cannot spare much time in discussing the failures who arrived at no successful conclusions. If there is any satisfaction in knowing that Cromwell desired to improve the world, then this letter will give pleasure to his admirers; if they search for accomplishment, then they will be disappointed. But in his case the flesh was already weak. On the day after the Battle of Dunbar, he wrote to: 'My beloved wife at the Cockpit [the family had already established itself near the seat of power in Whitehall]. My dearest . . . The Lord hath showed us an exceeding mercy. . . . I have been in my inward man marvellously supported; though I assure you I grow an old man, and feel the infirmities of age marvellously stealing upon me.'

To Ireton, in Ireland, he wrote on the same day, again full of 'the unspeakable goodness of the Lord, who hath thus appeared to the glory of His great Name, and the refreshment of His Saints.' And again the same day, to Lord Wharton: 'How gracious has the Lord

been in this great business.' Cromwell had been given, so he thought, conclusive proof at last that he was the appointed agent of God on earth, for the miracle of Dunbar was beyond dispute. He throws that sign of divine approval into the face of the governor of Edinburgh Castle in his letter to him on September 12th, wherein he writes proudly of 'the witness of God upon our solemn appeal' to battle. 'Did not you solemnly appeal and pray? Did not we do so too? And ought not you and we to think, with fear and trembling, of the hand of the Great God in this mighty and strange appearance of His' – at Dunbar. The student of the customs of primitive men, will be reminded of the contests between witch-doctors, as to which shall produce the most startling evidence of his power. When he entered the capital of Scotland he published, on September 14th, a proclamation which has the true ring of the victorious soldier-priests of the Old Testament: 'Whereas it hath pleased God, by His gracious providence and goodness, to put the city of Edinburgh and the town of Leith in my power.' The possessive pronoun should be noted, as not without significance of the (perhaps unconscious) temper of Cromwell's mind.

It was not unreasonable that the victor at Dunbar should have had hopeful expectations of the result of that battle. On September 24th he wrote to the Council in London: 'I am in great hopes through God's mercy, we shall be able this winter to give the people such an understanding of the justness of our cause and our desires for the just liberties of the people, that the better sort of them will be satisfied therewith; although

I must confess hitherto they continue obstinate. I thought I should have found in Scotland a conscientious people, and a barren country: about Edinburgh it is as fertile for corn as any part of England, but the people generally given to the most impudent lying, and frequent swearing, as is incredible to be believed.' The simple farmer of Huntingdon was learning his world, but slowly. He was still surprised that a nation of 'godly' people, who presumably had found the Lord when they rebelled against bishops, were still impudent liars. He also was still so innocent as to expect a country to be converted to the 'justness of the cause' of an invading army! In short, Cromwell was still a singularly innocent man.

For the greater part of the year following the Battle of Dunbar Cromwell was in Scotland. It had not been a very difficult task to outgeneral Charles I., who had a mind as short-sighted and as stiffly prejudiced and unbending as his own; for when it came to intrigue, the Puritan general could easily pass the royalist monarch. But in Charles II. – his present opponent in Scotland – Cromwell had met his match; and, if he could have lived to see the day when this dispossessed sovereign was to re-enter London as King of England again, it would be of extreme interest to have had a a letter from Cromwell to an intimate friend, in which he dealt with this strange misadventure of the providence of God.

But, for the moment, Providence did as Cromwell wished, since he had an army to see that no mistakes occurred. It was not until December 24th, 1650, that Edinburgh Castle surrendered. It would be difficult

to give a precise account of the operations undertaken for its capture, for Cromwell himself assured the Speaker of the House of Commons that: 'not any skill and wisdom of ours but the good hand of God hath given you this place.' He went on, however, with a riper worldly wisdom, to explain that 'I believe all Scotland hath not in it so much brass ordnance as this place.'

In February 1651 operations against the Scottish army were delayed by Cromwell's serious illness from fever; and it was not until June that he began (with Monk's more efficient assistance) the skilful strategy which, by the capture of Perth, changed the military position in a very radical manner. Cromwell had now thrown his army to the north of his enemy and Charles had an open road into England; and, as Cromwell probably desired, he fell into that trap and marched south to regain his English crown. Cromwell, in his letter of August 4th, tells the Speaker that he had foreseen this; but he had taken the risk 'knowing that if some issue were not put to this business, it would occasion another winter's war, to the ruin of your soldiery. . . .' So he begs Parliament 'to give the enemy some check until we be able to reach up to him . . . and indeed we have this comfortable experience from the Lord, that this enemy is heart-smitten by God, and whenever the Lord shall bring us up to them,' he believed they would be crushed. He reminds the Speaker that he followed the same strategy at Preston: 'upon deliberate advice, we chose rather to put ourselves between their army and Scotland; and how God succeeded, that is not well to be forgotten.'

The alarm in England was great, and contemporary writers have recorded that many began to think that Cromwell was playing the traitor, and had deliberately allowed the young Charles to pass him. In this suspicion they were very wrong; but there is some evidence that Cromwell arranged that the whole credit of beating the royalists should be his alone. His judgment had been perfectly sound; there was no danger in allowing Charles to advance into England, for, as Cromwell wisely foresaw, scarcely anyone rallied to the royal standard; and, far away from any stable base, the royalist army was as helpless as a flock of wandering sheep. This campaign was almost the only completely foolish thing that Charles II. did in his career.

Cromwell sent on Lambeth and Harrison to hang round Charles's army with their cavalry, keeping it from doing too much mischief until their chief could come up with the main force. By August 24th he had joined the other two generals at Warwick. On the 27th, with 28,000 men, he was at Evesham – where, if he had possessed enough historical knowledge, he might have remembered that a young prince had once beaten a rebel democratic army. But ignorance saved Cromwell from many unhappy moments in his life. The Scots were fortifying themselves in Worcester, where Cromwell attacked them on September 3rd, 1651 – exactly, to a day, a year after the victory of Dunbar.

As the successful climax of a daring strategy which Cromwell had planned since he placed himself to the north of the Scots over a month before – thus almost pushing them into England – the Battle of Worcester

was one of Cromwell's triumphs. But as a battle in itself it was of insignificant military interest. The Scots were only 16,000 at the most and were facing a Parliamentary army which had grown to over 30,000 men. Besides, the Scots (thanks to their folly in being obedient to Cromwell's skilful moves) were like rats in a trap. Charles and his rival both possessed craftsmanship as soldiers, both were personally brave in action, and Cromwell here again showed his contempt for danger when he rode forward – in the midst of the fiercest fighting – to offer the Scots quarter after his troops had broken into the city. The royalist army was almost annihilated on the spot or as it fled to Scotland.

It is not difficult to foresee Cromwell's despatch on the following day, announcing the victory to the parliament in London: 'I am not able yet to give you an exact account of the great things the Lord hath wrought for the Commonwealth and for his people. . . . The dimensions of this mercy are above my thoughts. It is, for aught I know, a crowning mercy.' The use of that dangerous phrase is almost proof of the innocency of the writer concerning the charge of seeking the Crown for his own head. 'I am bold humbly to beg that all thoughts may tend to the promoting of His Honour who hath wrought so great salvation, and that the fatness of these continual Mercies may not occasion pride and wantonness . . . and that justice and righteousnesss, mercy and truth may flow from you, as a thankful return to our gracious God.'

In other words, Cromwell is again suggesting that political results should follow his victory in the field. He was not exactly a man who loved war for war's sake,

CHARLES II., BY JOHN MICHAEL WRIGHT
National Portrait Gallery, London

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and the plunder he expected was not of the kind that the mercenary soldier usually seeks. This Puritan general desired to be paid in the somewhat mystical coin of the communion of saints. But such rewards are not easily issued by the Treasury of even a Puritan parliament. So Cromwell and his fanatics, and the many less spiritual persons who had collected around them, were to continue discontented or be paid in more material coin. The Puritan Revolution was not yet over, though at Worcester the royalist army had been utterly destroyed.

Cromwell's judgment in allowing Charles to invade England with the Scottish army was the cleverest stroke of both his political and military life. Scarcely a man would have troubled to rise again, either for the Stuarts or the Parliamentarians, if they had continued to fight it out between their English troops. But it was quite another matter to be raided by a lot of half-savage Scots. So the Parliamentary army at Worcester was (for the first time since the beginning of the civil war) again largely a force of trained bands of civilian citizens, who rushed to assist Cromwell's professional troops.

But if the armed citizens had crushed the Scots at Worcester and during their retreat – as, indeed, they did with great ferocity – they had more completely crushed themselves. After Worcester the power of the army was absolute, and that was coming to mean that Cromwell was the sole ruler of the British Isles. Parliament brought in a bill to give him further lands worth £4000 a year – he already had received large grants, as we have seen earlier – and he was presented

with Hampton Court, a royal palace, for a residence. Oxford had already chosen him as chancellor. The popular reception in the City of London was enthusiastic enough to turn anyone's head; and the inevitable Hugh Peters said that 'this man will be King of England yet.' Nevertheless, Oliver Cromwell was far too great a man to lose his head because the City shopkeepers and apprentices saw fit to wave their arms and empty their lungs in his honour. Yet we cannot ignore the evidence of his contemporaries that he had ambitious designs. Ludlow wrote that 'the General . . . took upon him a more stately behaviour and chose new friends. . . .'; and sent away as quickly as possible the men who had done good services in the Worcester campaign. Then the Hutchinson *Memoirs* declare that 'when the colonel heard how Cromwell used his troops, he was confirmed that he and his associates in the army were carrying on designs of private ambition, and resolved that none should share with them in the commands of the army or forts of the nation, but such as would be beasts, and be ridden upon by the proud chiefs.' Ludlow said that the soldiers 'were corrupted by him, kept as a standing force against the people.' Mrs. Hutchinson maintained that Ireton was so shocked at his father-in-law's ambitious symptoms that he was about to hurry over from Ireland (where he was in command as deputy) when he suddenly died of plague in November 1651.

It must not be forgotten that Cromwell was technically still nothing more than one member of the Council of State, a member of parliament, and commander-in-chief of the army. It is therefore unfair to hold him

responsible for everything that was done in the name of the State. Its action was often in direct apparent opposition to his wishes. Thus he wanted to pardon the Earl of Derby for his part in the rebellion, and we have seen how long he hesitated in executing Charles. He seems to have been one of those men whose violence came in sudden bursts, and, as if a timid creature at heart, when the blow was struck he had fears lest he had gone too far. His enemies, of course, said that all this was hypocrisy, and that he was always pretending to want to do one thing when he was doing the contrary. It is hard to say that they were unreasonable or uncharitable, for Cromwell gave them grounds for much suspicion.

It is, for example, hard to know how far to charge him with the cruel treatment of the Scottish prisoners taken during the Worcester campaign. It is on this point that a serious attack has been made on Professor Gardiner's accuracy, in the course of a valuable correspondence in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1919, commenting on Mr. Roland Usher's similar attack from the United States. Clarendon wrote that these prisoners were 'driven like cattle with a guard to London and there treated with great rigour; and many perished for want of food, and being enclosed in small room, till they were sold to the plantations for slaves, they died of all diseases.' Gardiner, writing of a proposal to send them as slaves in the Guinea gold mines, adds: 'Happily nothing came of this barbarous project.' As his critics have now pointed out, the reference he gives for this statement does not support his text. There is evidence that they were sold at 'half a crown a dozen.' Of the

six thousand prisoners sent to Tothill Fields in London, twelve hundred died within the month they were quartered there, which may be sufficient proof that they were not all ill-used in America, but does not brighten the reputation of Cromwell and his fellow-rulers. This incident, together with the previously related cases of slave raiding for women in Ireland, and slave selling in Scotland, will convince most unprejudiced readers that Cromwell and his friends were not leading lights in the history of humanitarianism. One cannot imagine Laud or Charles himself being so callous of human suffering. The general of the sack of Drogheda and Wexford had a coarse grain in his nature, that all his religious rhetoric could not conceal.

CHAPTER XII

AFTER WORCESTER

The Battle of Worcester was such a crushing blow that Cromwell never again was called out to a field of battle. Yet the army behind him was still the basis of the government of England. We do not hear of it in arms because it had succeeded in annihilating its opponents. To call such a condition of affairs peace would be an abuse of terms.

Nobody was satisfied with this position, least of all the army itself – or perhaps it would be truer to say, the leaders of the army, for the soldiers themselves, in the bulk, were not worrying much about politics, except in so far as their chance of getting pay was affected by a change of government. It was easy enough to demand a modest private's share without supporting the case by any elaborate political theory such as would have interested Plato or Aristotle. But it became quite another matter when Cromwell and Lambert and Harrison were manœuvring for the supremacy at Whitehall. When a man wants a crown or a presidency, or some other symbol of supreme power to rule his fellows, he naturally does not lay stress on that fact. It sounds less grasping to talk of the rights of man, or even of God himself; and we must never take at its face value all that was said and written by the politicians and generals who were now fighting for the chief places in the government of England.

The position of the Puritan revolutionists had never been so critical as it was now that they had completely crushed the royalists. That rash act of war had only led them into a more deadly struggle. The rebel leaders were now fighting among themselves. The only point on what they seemed agreed was in fear and dislike of Cromwell. Some of them hated him because he was becoming a compromiser – or, in other words, saner – as happens in the case of most men when they are successful. Some because he had a natural liking to work with an honest man, and put down corruption when it could be done without too much danger to the cause of his own party and himself. Some hated him as all wise people hate a very strong man who has won his position by hard fighting in battle and in assembly.

To tell the truth, Cromwell was not nearly as strong as he looked. He had two serious disabilities for a strong man. He did not know exactly what he wanted to do; and, secondly, he was clever enough to know that there is no royal, straight road to truth. So although he had almost supreme power after his victory at Worcester, we find him wavering for years. On October 2nd he wrote an intimate letter to 'my Christian Friend' Cotton, the pastor of the church at Boston, in New England. It is full of satisfaction for his recent great victory, when 'the Lord marvellously appeared against' his enemies and 'raised upon them such snares as the enclosed will show.' But Cromwell wrote as one still very confused as to what he ought to do now, for he continues: 'How shall we behave ourselves after such mercies? What is the Lord a-doing? What prophecies are now fulfilling? . . . I am a poor weak

creature, and not worthy of the name of a worm; yet accepted to serve the Lord and His people. Indeed, my dear friend, you know not me, my weaknesses, my inordinate passions, my unskilfulness and every way unfitness for my work.'

One does not imagine that Cæsar or Alexander or Napoleon ever wrote to their friends in any such modest and hesitating a manner. They knew their minds, even when they were wrong. Blindness of mind is a great aid to the genius; it leads to immediate success. We have seen, and shall continue to see, that Cromwell was most successful when he drove straight ahead in a paroxysm of fanatical fury. At the moment he was writing tremulous letters. Like the rest of the army he saw that parliament was the chief difficulty. On September 25th, three weeks after the Battle of Worcester, Cromwell was pressing a resolution that a bill should be introduced to dissolve parliament on a fixed date. It was a timid beginning. In June last the fanatical General Harrison, Cromwell's friend, had begun the attack by accusing a member of parliament of accepting bribes from royalists, and the sinner was expelled. But parliament had its revenge by not electing Harrison to the next Council of State, chosen in November. Cromwell was put at the top of the poll – for close observers knew that Cromwell was not an extreme man at heart, in his calmer moments when his brain storms had passed over.

On December 10th a very significant event occurred. Cromwell called a meeting of his leading officers, and the parliamentary lawyers, to discuss more precisely what was to be done with this assembly which still

persisted in calling itself the Parliament of England. It plainly could not continue in its present form, for most of its members had been driven out by the army, and, of the few who still attended, every one knew that some were scoundrels who were feathering their nests, as political adventurers are accustomed to do, and that few of the rest would attend to the national good if it stood in the way of their own fads and fancies and friends. The meeting called by Cromwell to assemble in the Speaker's house caused still more embarrassment, for some of its members suggested recalling one of the late king's sons to the throne. To which Cromwell made the alarming answer: 'that will be a business of more than ordinary difficulty; but really I think, if it can be done with safety and preservation of our rights, both as Englishmen and Christians, that a settlement of somewhat with monarchical power in it would be very effectual.'

The hint was sufficient to set both his friends and his enemies to work. The friends began to make suggestions to the leading officers of the army that Cromwell would make a possible king, and, of course, the enemies had no further doubt about his ambitions. Lilburne again began to be troublesome to reformers who did not want to reform as quickly as he did, and he accused Cromwell of getting him fined £7000 and banished for life for saying that Hazlerigg had been corrupt in the law-courts. Cromwell, on the other hand, was in one of his compromising moods, and insisted on the passing (in February 1652) of an Act of Oblivion, but with so many exceptions that it was not so gentle as it seemed. However, Cromwell did a great deal of

talking to make it milder still, until Ludlow said he was doing this 'so that he might fortify himself by the addition of new friends for the carrying on of his designs.' In other words, most people now thought that the successful soldier was preparing to claim the crown as a reward for his military services. But the judicial modern reader, with a great many facts before him, will still hesitate to assert that Cromwell had yet made up his mind that he had any such ambition – except, perhaps, as the vaguest dream in the background of his mind.

Nevertheless, it was a dream it was often impossible to forget in his waking hours. Foreign kings and governments wrote to him direct, as if he were already on the throne. After Worcester, Cromwell was an obvious power in Europe, for he had scattered the army of the lawful king of England as an autumn wind tears the leaves from the forest. Even the great Cardinal Mazarin, in May of 1652, sent Gentillot to Cromwell bearing a letter from the French king himself, and they were not the kind of men to worry about anyone but the most powerful. Of course, all these being men of the world and of some considerable education, the late farmer of Huntingdon was a nut that was fairly easily cracked, and we soon find Cromwell in favour of an alliance with France, whereas the majority of the Council of State desired to fight France, and Holland as well.

Cromwell was still clinging, rather desperately, to the emotional rock of his Puritan faith. It was becoming ever more difficult in the midst of very worldly men. He still disliked the idea of fighting against the

Protestant Dutch, though he had begun to feel that an alliance with Catholic France was not as unholy an affair as he would doubtless have considered it in his earlier days. But the bulk of the Puritan revolutionists were men of trade, and they now had little fear of degenerating Spain, but great envy of the growing strength of France as a trading rival. They also feared the competition of the Dutch, and were quite prepared to kill sound Protestants if they were also successful rival merchants. Cromwell was not a man to carry his convictions to the verge of martyrdom, or even to the risk of a loss in the political game, so he gave way to the traders. By May 1652 war had broken out between the two Protestant republics – and the cynics had another good tale to tell at the expense of sentimental sectarians, who, in a moment of absent-mindedness, were defending their bank balances at the expense of their creed. The Puritan Rebellion had indeed been a success: Cromwell and his soldiers had by their gallant fighting raised to the seat of power a small gang of men who were now able to make their fellow-countrymen fight a war for the sake of increasing the profits of City merchants. One ardent Puritan leader announced that the Dutch war was blessed by God, and another declared that 'we are rivals for the fairest mistress in all Christendom – trade' – and that settled it! As Professor Gardiner caustically remarks: 'The strong Puritan zeal which is supposed to have animated the officers is, indeed, except in a few instances, conspicuously absent from their letters.'

It was not religious convictions that made this Puritan England soon discontented with the Dutch

War. It was its expense. The taxation was getting unbearable, and Cromwell was shrewd enough to know that he could not long continue to govern England if he and his reforming friends asked Englishmen for more money than Charles Stuart had ever dreamed of demanding from Parliament in the days of his worst tyranny – as they called it. So Cromwell formed a peace party to stop the war. There was a very good case to put before his military friends when he asked them to stop a naval war. On December 10th the taxation assessments were raised from £90,000 to £120,000 a month. In the happier days of land warfare this had all gone to the soldiers. Parliament had now the cool insolence to announce that the army was to be disbanded until the soldiers could manage on £80,000 a month – and then proposed that £40,000 per month should go to the navy. This was the kind of reform that the most ardent Puritan soldier could not reconcile with his conscience, and from this moment the next political crisis, brewing since the Battle of Worcester, began to develop rapidly. There is reason to believe that Vane was deliberately strengthening the fleet in order to have a force which would balance the danger from the army. Between the two, Vane's ideal republic might possibly save its life. As against Cromwell he might now well believe the republic was doomed, and he proposed to sell the royal palaces – Cromwell lived in one of them – so that there should be less temptation for ambitious men to play the part of kings.

It was indeed time that Cromwell acted against such unreasonable idealists. With his usual happy success

in blending his conscience with his convenience he could now easily prove that parliament was going from bad to worse. Writing of this period Professor Gardiner records: 'It was notorious that many members who had entered the House poor were now rolling in wealth, without having performed any service deserving recognition.' So Cromwell had the best of excuses for talking things over with Whitelocke during November. It is a record of the greatest value, for it shows how poor was the quality of Cromwell's mind. For all his matter-of-fact realism on the battlefield he could not see clearly when he had to deal with the more complex affairs of political life.

After flattery of Whitelocke's faithfulness and friendship, Cromwell spoke of the danger lest the victorious Puritans should lose their gains because they were now squabbling among each other. Whitelocke, being a man who could see facts before sentimentalities, delicately hinted that the trouble arose because the leaders of the army were full of ambition; 'few thinking their services to be duly rewarded, and the emulation of the officers breaking out daily more and more,' and the 'private soldiers will in this time of their idleness grow into disorder.' Cromwell's reply was a counter-charge that 'the army begins to have a strange distaste against them [the members of parliament] . . . really their pride and ambition and self-seeking, engrossing all places of honour and profit to themselves and their friends . . . their delay of business and design to perpetuate themselves, and to continue the power in their own hands . . . and the scandalous lives of some of the chief of them.' All this was perfectly true, but

Cromwell, being a sentimentalist, seemed unable to grasp the fact that it was himself and the soldiers who had driven out the other more representative members of the House of Commons. It was the soldiers who had 'purged' the House, and now they were grumbling at the result of their own handiwork.

But—whatever the reason—the hard fact was that the existing government was impossible; so Cromwell began suggesting to Whitelocke that it was necessary there should be 'some authority and power so full and so high as to restrain and keep things in better order.' Then he threw off the cloak of ambiguity, so far as Cromwell could be direct, and asked: 'What if a man should take upon him to be king?' Whitelocke saw at once that the king was to be Cromwell himself, and promptly replied that 'Cromwell had already seized all the powers of a king; nevertheless, as for the title itself: "I think the remedy would be worse than the disease."' He frankly told him that those who had fought for a republic would not tolerate the betrayal of their principles, because they were persuaded – 'though I think much mistaken,' added Whitelocke cynically – 'that under the government of a Commonwealth they shall enjoy more Liberty and Right than under a Monarchy.' He then said that innumerable jealous rivals in the army and parliament were ready to plot against Cromwell, and that his best policy was to make terms with Charles Stuart and restore him to the throne with such 'limits to monarchical power as shall secure our spiritual and civic liberties . . . and this may be effectively done by having the power of the Militia continued in yourself.' But this was not the advice the

ambitious Cromwell desired, and Whitelocke tells us that 'it was not long before he found an occasion by an honourable employment to send me out of the way (as some of his nearest relatives particularly his daughter, Claypole, confessed) that I might be no obstacle to his ambitious designs.'

However, Cromwell was no longer, perhaps never had been, a free agent in the matter of seeking a new political constitution. For if he did not act, there were other leaders of the army and extreme politicians who would take his place, and lead the next revolution themselves. General Lambert, for one, was full of ambition and was a power in the army that could not be ignored. He had been promised the lord-deputyship of Ireland, but his arrogance and ostentatious pride so annoyed parliament that the offer of the post was withdrawn (in the words of the Hutchinson *Memoirs*): 'upon Cromwell's procurement, who hereby designed to make way for his new son-in-law, Colonel Fleetwood.' So Lambeth lost his deputyship, and Ludlow became 'commander of the horse, whereupon Lambert, with a heart full of spite, malice and revenge, retreated to his palace at Wimbledon, and sat there watching an opportunity to destroy the parliament.'

Lambert's character is of particular interest, for he proves, by contrast, that there was a something of nobility in Cromwell, even in his most intriguing ambitions. Their contemporary, Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson, much though she despised Cromwell, grasped the truth when she wrote of Lambert that 'his ambition had this difference from the Protector's: the one [Cromwell] was gallant and great, the other had nothing

but an unworthy pride, most insolent in prosperity, and as abject and bare in adversity.' A few passages later we find her writing: 'to speak truth, the Cromwell's personal courage and magnanimity upheld him against all enemies and malcontents. His own army disliked him'; and yet when Lambert led an opposition to some of Cromwell's plans: 'the protector, hearing of it overawed them all, and told them, "it was not they who upheld him but he them," and made them understand what pitiful fellows they were; whereupon they all, like rated dogs, clapped their tail between their legs, and begged his pardon, and left Lambert to fall alone, none daring to own him publicly, though many in their heart wished him the sovereignty.'

All this evidence of Cromwell's power is obvious to the modern reader, but at the time it was a very delicate balance whether he would hold his supremacy or not. Beside the meanly ambitious Lambert, there was that unbalanced fanatic General Harrison, who would never rest until he had established the reign of saints, a sufficiently remote constitutional solution that would have been harmless, had it not been that foolish persons like Harrison were useful tools for less honest men.

Cromwell was thus in a whirling mass of plans and intrigues of all sorts, and, bold man though he was, he was in danger of being swept off his feet. He realised that the hottest spirits in the army would not allow the insignificant Rump to sit much longer, and in this they would have popular support. Cromwell tried hard to get the parliament and the officers to come to a compromise. He said: 'We had at least ten or twelve meetings, most humbly begging and beseeching of

them [the members of parliament] that by their own means they would bring forth those good things which had been promised.' But the Rump stolidly refused to make any useful reforms or to dissolve itself within any reasonable time. What was worse, as already noted, the only reform which seemed to arouse much enthusiasm in parliament was the disbandment of the army.

The first crisis came on April 15th, 1653. Cromwell had not entered the House for a month, but on that day he sat again, and once more demanded a new parliament – instead of only replacing the excluded members of the Long Parliament. The reply was a declaration of war, for another member at once demanded a new general. The issue was now clear: was there to be a new parliament, or a new general? Harrison, enraptured by his dream of a government of saints, for the moment approved of Cromwell's dismissal, but no other army leader dared risk the chief's anger.

On April 20th it was clear that the Parliamentary majority ('the rank and file who had dabbled in corruption' writes Gardiner), had determined to pass a bill which made parliament permanently supreme over the army. The officers promptly replied, demanding instant dissolution, and the placing of power in the hands of a provisional government of 'well affected men such as were known to be of good affection to the Commonwealth' – in other words, supporters of the army, and, if possible, inclined to Harrison's saints. The House, on April 20th, came to the resolution to pass its bill before the army could say any more, and it was also intended to dismiss Cromwell from the command and

recall Fairfax. Harrison sent a message to Cromwell of what was afoot, and Cromwell had one of those inspirations from heaven which always came when his personal interests demanded rapid action. He went to the Parliament House accompanied by a guard of soldiers, whom he posted around the building. Then he took his seat within.

As he passed Harrison he whispered that the time had now come to dissolve the assembly; but the man who desired saints, instead of members of parliament, began to hesitate, probably meditating, with reason, whether this violent action was the best way to get his desires. For fifteen minutes or so Cromwell listened to the debate; then the Speaker brought it to a close by calling for a vote on the bill which was to make parliament supreme. Cromwell was evidently working up to one of his brain storms. But, when he rose to speak against the bill, he began in almost a pleasant reminiscence of the parliament's good services to the nation in the past. However, his smouldering anger soon came to the surface, and he burst forth against his fellow-members of the House: 'charging them not to have a heart to do anything for the public good, to have espoused the corrupt interest of Presbytery and lawyers who were the supporters of tyranny and oppression.' He then apparently completely lost control of himself – much as he did when he gave the order to kill all at Drogheda – and tramped about the House hurling offensive (and probably true) remarks at members whose public and private lives did not suit his taste. When Sir Peter Wentworth protested against his behaviour, Cromwell finally gave way to his madness, shouting: 'I will put an

end to your prating. I say you are no Parliament. I will put an end to your sitting. Call them in, call them in.' And on Harrison carrying the order to the door the musketeers of Cromwell's own regiment marched into the House.

Never in all the days of his tyranny had Charles Stuart done anything so outrageous as this. When he went to arrest the five members, not a soldier was allowed to enter the chamber itself. Little wonder that Vane, that standard-bearer of all the political liberties, rose in horror to protest, and Cromwell, in a very self-revealing flash of what he really thought of republican theories and fads, forgot for a moment his *rôle* of the prophet of freedom, and burst forth with that famous phrase: 'O Sir Henry Vane! Sir Henry Vane! The Lord deliver me from Sir Henry Vane.' It was the cry of the man who had no mind and no time for theories, whose one natural instinct was force – which he was using at this moment.

The Speaker refused to move until Harrison put hands on him, and Algernon Sidney refused also, but the rest crept out with what dignity they could retain, pursued by Cromwell's voice: 'Some of you are drunkards. Some of you are lewd-livers. Some of you are corrupt scandalous in the profession of the Gospel.' His eye caught sight of the mace: 'What shall we do with this bauble?' and he ordered a captain to carry it away.

It was necessary, of course, to throw the responsibility for this hysterical outburst on his divine orders. 'I have sought the Lord night and day, that He would rather slay me than put me upon the doing of this

work.' He had a timid mind, after all, and was always throwing the responsibility on others. Perhaps that is one of the sources of hypocrisy. When Allen, one of the members, dared to reply to this flood of abuse, Cromwell immediately charged him with owing £700,000 to the State, and ordered his arrest. Since he was released the next day, we can either conclude that Cromwell realised he could not support his charge, or that he was indifferent whether Allen was corrupt or not. The scene ended with Cromwell putting the offending bill under his cloak, and then he marched out, ordering the door of the House to be locked.

In the afternoon of the same day, Cromwell, with Lambert and Harrison, went to the Council of State, and its members also were turned into the street, but not before Bradshaw had spoken words which expressed the calm irony of a sane man addressing one who was beyond control: 'Sir, we have heard what you did at the House in the morning, and before many hours all England will hear it, but, Sir, you are mistaken to think Parliament is dissolved, for no power under heaven can dissolve them but themselves; therefore take you notice of that.' Which was an admirable piece of theory; but, for the moment, there stood before the speaker these generals, Cromwell, Lambert, and Harrison, as proof that the army in practice was greater than law and order.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROTECTOR

The reader will perceive that the Puritan Rebellion was proceeding successfully on its way. Its last great stride towards freedom was to make it possible for forty musketeers to turn the only representative body in England into the street. However, the event aroused little indignation – except among the ejected members and the honest Admiral Blake – for the previous successes of the Rebellion had made the members of parliament no longer representative of anybody but themselves. In such a strangely paradoxical manner do revolutions win freedom for their victims. The long discredited Rump Parliament was scarcely mourned by anyone. Indeed, Cromwell for the moment became really popular when he dismissed it. It was regarded as his own triumph, of course, and the royalists began to suggest that Charles II. might marry one of Cromwell's daughters, and the two ruling families might then merge happily in one, Oliver taking Ireland and a dukedom for his share of the spoils.

Cromwell's position grew in embarrassments with every success. He had at last overthrown every other institution with any pretence to legal authority. Now, when he had even killed the rebellion's own child, the miserable bastard parliament of the Rump, he had left nothing standing but himself and his fellow-officers of

the army. They had to make a new constitution for England. The only men whose opinions were of much importance at the moment were Cromwell, Lambert, and Harrison. Lambert, being only anxious to get on himself, did not waste time in any very original plans, and said he merely wanted a small Council of ten, with perhaps an elected parliament later on. Harrison, however, had grander views. He was still convinced that the Kingdom of Christ was at last appearing, though it is not clear to the modern observer that the proofs were as self-evident as he seemed to think. For the moment Harrison would be content if he could get an assembly of seventy 'saints,' chosen by himself and other godly friends.

Cromwell, of course, had no precise plan in his head. It was always his way to break other institutions down before he had anything ready to put in their place. He was never a thinker – acting was more in his line. He was now, as usual, ready for compromise, when he had already made it impossible by some violent deed. Anyhow, now he compromised between Lambert and Harrison; and he and the little Council of State (seven soldiers to three civilians), which had been appointed after the destruction of the Rump, decided to nominate a parliament of its own. It ended by the Council of the Army choosing a hundred and forty men from a list of persons selected by the Congregational Churches throughout the land; and Cromwell sent out the writs of summons in his own name. The rebellion had taken another step towards freedom. The election of the English parliament was now made the perfectly free choice – of the Army Council with the assistance of the

Congregationalists! As the writ of summons said: 'I, Oliver Cromwell, Captain General of all the armies and forces, do hereby summon and require you to appear.' He even forgot to mention the Congregationalists in his writ, and said that the members selected were 'divers persons fearing God and of approved fidelity and honest,' nominated 'by myself with the advice of my Counsel of Officers.' There was no affectation of modesty here.

Cromwell now began to demand that people should stand with bare heads in his presence, and it was a general opinion that he might as well call himself king as by any lesser title. This did not suit Harrison and the Fifth Monarchy men, who were seeking a super-saint. Harrison was even reported to have announced that 'it was revealed unto him that there would speedily be a king again, but not one of the former race, nor such carnal persons as some eminent in present power, but a man after God's own heart, and a king anointed by the Spirit.' Whereupon he struck his own breast, as if to indicate that the man had arrived for this all important post.

But Cromwell went his own way with the dull weight of the army carrying him on to still greater power ahead. The nominated assembly obeyed his writs, and Barebones' Parliament arrived at Westminster on July 4th, 1653. Cromwell opened their proceedings with a long speech full of the genius that is akin to madness and the eloquence which is very near to hypocrisy; and yet it is possible to accept it as the utterance of a man who still believed in his own honesty – which is proof of the depth of Cromwell's imagination. He spoke through-

out as if he were addressing a revivalist meeting, and, indeed, he was not altogether wrong.

His first business was to recall to his hearers: 'the series of Providences wherein the Lord hath appeared, dispensing wonderful things to these nations from the beginning of our troubles to this very day.' His apology for himself was worthy of the great satirists – if he and his audience had but possessed the humour to appreciate it. He spoke of the 'strange windings and turnings of providence, those very great appearances of God, in crossing and thwarting the purposes of men, that he might raise up a poor and contemptible company of men, neither versed in military affairs, nor having much natural propensity to them, even through the owning of a principle of godliness and of religion.' From that introduction of 'godliness' God had gone on blessing their endeavours. The destruction of the king and bishops and House of Lords had, he said, 'print of Providence set upon it, so that he who runs may read.'

He then related the mercy of God in getting rid of the Rump; it will not be repeated here, for the intelligent reader must soon grow tired of the providence of heaven as an excuse for every military act of violence and reason for every mistake. He said that the members insisted on passing a Parliament Bill which: 'as we apprehended would have thrown away the liberties of the nation into the hands of those who had never fought for it. And upon this we thought it our duty not to suffer it. And upon this the House was dissolved.' There is not a word of apology for his violence; his silence is a blend of the insolent tyrant and the crafty politician – with that oily, complaisant conscience that

concealed all guile from his own eyes. That was one of the great qualities of Oliver Cromwell: he could hold the mirror up to his own heart and believe that he saw a pure intention, where a smaller man, of less imagination, might have seen the sullied features of hypocrisy and human frailty.

This argument about the unreasonableness of the Parliament Bill is an example of the amazing blindness or insolence of Cromwell's mind. His case was that the Rump refused to dissolve and make way for a more representative body. It saw that a free election would have meant the recall of the Stuarts, so it decided to remain in power and fill up its vacant seats by elections carefully controlled by itself. For this intention Cromwell had promptly driven it into the street – and then, with equal promptness, he proceeded to nominate a whole parliament himself! Brushing aside all humbug, it came to this: that Cromwell saw that the Rump would nominate its own friends, whereas he intended to be in a position to nominate his. With such a philosophy of politics – a mere system of brute force – it is idle to waste time in logical discussion. One might as well argue on the philosophy of a prize-fight.

But it was in his comments on all this that Cromwell reached the heights of sublime fantasy. Gazing over the assembly before him, he told it: 'I confess I never looked to see such a day as this, when Jesus Christ should be so owned as He is at this day, and in this work. Jesus Christ is owned this day by your call.' Truly it was an amazing conclusion, and only a mind of Cromwell's obscurity could have soothed itself with such a hope. This assembly had been chosen by an army

of soldiers who had put themselves in power by violence – and Cromwell thought it was the work of a Prince of Peace who had commanded his followers to turn the other cheek.

Such was the trivial intellect of the man who had now won supreme power in England. Cromwell had his reward. He had called in the saints – or the nearest approximation to such as were in sight – and he soon found himself in the midst of a swarming mass of fanatics who would have reduced England to a conventicle meeting, could they have got their way. There were some sane minds functioning somewhere in the mass, and there were a few events of worldly wisdom; such as acts providing for the registration of births, marriages, and burials; civil marriage was established, and another act provided for the custody of the insane – which must have been of personal interest to many of the members who voted for it. An act for the abolition of the Chancery Court was swept through in a day; it showed an admirable intention of doing away with a vast mass of law that was profitable mainly to lawyers; yet, without anything being put in its place, this act was only the cry of a helpless child in distress.

But all this was merely fiddling while Rome was burning, and the Little Barebones' Parliament of 1653 could not last more than months. No party could stand this farce any longer. The followers of Christ, strangely enough, demanded such hard terms from their Dutch enemies, that peace could not be made, as was urgently necessary for a government which could not find money to pay for the war. The irrepressible Lilburne came back from exile and raised his voice once more. When

arrested he outwitted the government at every move, and was released amidst an outburst of popular delight – the soldiers in Court themselves beating their drums with joy – which must have shown even the short-sighted army leaders how precarious was their hold on power. Lilburne followed up his victory by accusing Cromwell of high treason because he had not (on dismissing the Rump) given England the free parliament the law ordered. It was certainly as good a charge as the one which had beheaded Strafford and Laud and Charles.

The danger to Cromwell was that the soldiers saw a lot of truth in Lilburne's words. One party wanted to make Harrison commander-in-chief instead of Cromwell. The army as a whole had, indeed, a grave cause for uneasiness. The government was at its wits' end for money, and, in one of its sanest moments, proposed that the assessments (which provided the pay of the army), should be reduced; and, with even still greater intelligence, suggested that the higher officers, who had already received large rewards in lands and money for their services, should now go without pay for a year.

Another crisis had arrived. The unromantic reader will have, by this time, observed that most of the crises have arisen when the soldiers thought they were going to lose their pay. There were all sorts of conflicting sects in the army and many (the majority, probably) did not care two proverbial straws about religion in any form. Colonel Joyce – who had once carried off King Charles from Holmby – had just been dismissed from the service because he said that it would have been a good thing if Cromwell had been killed in

battle years ago. But, at the mere mention of losing their pay, the army became solid again. Cromwell and Lambert distrusted each other profoundly – and with good cause – but Lambert, who was a man of the world, knew that Cromwell was the only leader who could keep the soldiers together in a crisis and save their pay – and probably their necks. So at the end of November he went to his chief with an *Instrument of Government*, which he had drawn up and discussed with his fellow-officers. It proposed that Cromwell should be made king. But Cromwell, as usual, did not know his mind, or had enough sense left to know that this was more than the army would stand. So he hesitated. Whereupon Lambert and his officers persuaded a group of members of parliament to go down to the House one morning early (on November 12th) and dissolve themselves before the rest arrived. The plot succeeded, and Cromwell declared that he had never heard a word about it until it was all over. However, a valiant little band of the Parliamentary saints clung to their seats and would not dissolve themselves, declaring that they had been called by God – whereas it was by Oliver Cromwell – and that there they intended to stay: 'apprehending that their said call was chiefly the promoting the interest of Jesus Christ.' But the soldiers had less theological convictions, and promptly turned them out, by what they knew very well Cromwell could describe as 'the arm of the Lord of Hosts' in his next speech. So intimately were religion and daily life linked together in this sanctimonious age.

The rebellion for liberty thus still progressed: another assembly had been turned adrift by the army

that had conquered England. The officers went back to Cromwell with a revised Instrument of Government, which made him Lord Protector for life (instead of king), with a council of fifteen, and a parliament of four hundred – to make dull people still imagine they had a free constituion.

Thus at last Cromwell was formally declared to be the constitutional head of the State. On December 16th, 1653, he went through the farce of being installed in office, dressed in a black coat instead of the soldier's scarlet jacket he had worn so many years Whitelocke records that: 'All ceremonies and respects were paid to him by all sorts of men, as to their Prince.' There is no other word than farce for the ceremony; for if it had not been for the army around him, it was more likely than not that Cromwell would have been thrown into the Thames instead of being placed in his chair of office. If Edmund Calamy, the man of God, spoke the truth, Cromwell was well aware of his position. When Calamy told him that nine out of ten English citizens were his enemies, and that he could not govern such a majority, Cromwell replied: 'What if I should disarm the nine and put a sword in the tenth man's hand? Would not that do the business?' After that admission or threat, it is not necessary to take Cromwell's political orations too seriously.

The rather complex details of this new constitution of England are a matter for the general history books where things of little importance are often discussed. For one thing, it is noteworthy that parliament was not to meet until next September 1654, until which time Cromwell and his Council were to rule by ordinance –

and within another six months (March 1655) Cromwell was ruling by major-generals! So it is clear that the reader can leave the glorious 'free' constitution of 1653 to the antiquarian lawyers. It is of more interest to see how an intelligent, well-informed and earnest republican contemporary looked at the whole affair. This is how the *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson* scornfully record this period, when at last the Puritan army had triumphed over all its enemies and had raised its commander to almost absolute supremacy: 'Cromwell and his army grew wanton with their power and invented a thousand tricks of government, which, when nobody opposed, they themselves fell to dislike and vary every day. First he calls a parliament out of his own pocket [the Little Barebones' Parliament of 1653], himself naming a sort of Godly men for every county. . . . Shortly after he makes up several sorts of mock parliaments, but not finding one of them absolutely to his turn, turned them off again.' That is how it appeared to the stern judgment of one who had taken the republican theories seriously, and it is hard to find words which more accurately express the essential facts of the situation.

The real tragedy of Cromwell's life now begins. He was, at heart, a sincere man; that is, he was able to believe in the truth of his own narrow philosophy of life. He had great and noble ambitions to perform many small and rather ignoble political and religious deeds which, he thought – nay, was convinced – would make England a better place. For these things he had been striving for over twelve years with vast energy. At last his striving had been so far successful that he now found himself by far the most powerful man in the State.

He had, indeed, more absolute power than any king of England had possessed since William the Conqueror, the last king who had conquered England with the sword – for the invasions of Henry IV. and Henry VII. were little but family squabbles.

Yet now, when at last Cromwell had won his power, he discovered that he could do very little indeed. It was not fair to hold him personally responsible for every act of government while he was not the legal head of the state. But now that he had become Protector, with rights of coercion such as the Tudors would have envied, he must take his place in the dock of history as the chief prisoner, if anyone is to be tried for the failure to govern England in an efficient manner. Of course, in theory he had no power to veto any parliamentary bill, unless it was unconstitutional, and an executive act formally needed the consent of the councillors, who were, in theory, irremovable, and therefore independent of both Protector and parliament. But there were plenty of legal loopholes in such a constitution, even if the man who was soon to rule by major-generals was only looking for holes of escape, whereas he was always ready to knock down the whole wall.

With all his legal power, and all his illegal energy to do without the law – as he had so often during his career – what in substance did Cromwell do in the way of reforming England as he and his army had professed to desire? He had fought for liberty of religious conscience, for the right to worship as a man pleased – which he said Laud had not allowed. When he had power himself he refused to tolerate Catholics, just as Laud drew the line at Calvinists. Of course, in practice

both men winked at many infringements of their harsh, persecuting orders, as when Cromwell allowed Biddle, the Unitarian, to escape capital punishment by imprisoning him instead in the Scilly Isles. But, strangely enough, one of the first men to suffer under the rule of the man who had called the Barebones' Parliament of 'Saints,' was General Harrison, who was the leader of those Fifth Monarchy men who were daily expecting the arrival of God's rule upon the earth. One of Cromwell's first acts as Protector was to dismiss Harrison from his command in the army, in December 1653. Harrison was palpably a sincere fanatic, and the Protector could not work with him; whereas he could tolerate the selfish adventurer, Lambert, until 1657 – which is a light on Cromwell's character not to be ignored by unprejudiced students. The Hutchinson *Memoirs* go so far as to say: 'True religion was now almost lost, even among the religious party, and hypocrisy became an epidemical disease.' So it came to this, that Cromwell tolerated anything he was pleased to find tolerable, which was usually something that did not interfere with his own continuation in power.

Cromwell issued – with the theoretical approval of his Council – over eighty ordinances between his appointment as Protector and the meeting of the parliament in September 1654. These included useful regulations for highways, administrative instructions concerning the Treasury, and the relief of poor prisoners. There is little doubt that Cromwell had an innate sense of justice and order, and if he had been able to ignore the world as it existed, and had not been disturbed by other 'reformers,' with rival schemes of their own,

he would have put many things in England straighter than he found them. He was quite right, for example, in trying to stop the monstrous scandal of the Court of Chancery (though it was Cromwell's civil war that had caused a large part of the confusion and delays), and showed sound sense in making Hale a judge and his chief legal adviser. But Cromwell's Chancery reforms did not, in fact, amount to very much more than good intentions, for, as Mr. Inderwick summed up, the reforms were, in part, balanced by the new evil of making equity a rigid code, instead of allowing it to be, as it was in origin, the freedom of the supreme power to override all law which unexpectedly turned out to be unjust in particular instances. Cromwell's main defect was the want of a subtle, cultured mind, which alone could have foreseen such an unfortunate result.

A more satisfying act was the pardoning of all prisoners under sentence of death (except for murder) when he first seized power by ejecting the Rump Parliament. It was one of Cromwell's most amiable traits that (when not inflamed by religious lust) he had a tender heart that was guided by strong common sense, and he found himself unable to do ferocious deeds of so-called law and justice which the ruling classes had been doing for centuries.

There were other very desirable reforms which Cromwell endeavoured to bring about by his ordinances; for example, the abolition of cock-fighting, duelling, and excessive horse-racing. Swearers, gamesters, minstrels, Sunday-shoppers and travellers were all forbidden, for more or less inadequate reasons, in

the vain attempt to make England Puritan by law. Adulterers and idle and dissolute persons were also to be punished: the adulterers by death. Now all this was much in the nature of an idealist sitting on a judge's bench crying for the millennium. In practical effect it was no more successful than if some modern reformer tried to abolish, by Act of Parliament, the barbaric vulgarities of jazz and cinema pictures. That Cromwell should have hoped and endeavoured to drive English men and women into his Puritan morality by police regulations stamps him as a childish statesman.

But, even at his worst, he had a saner notion of politics than the men who gathered together to make the first Protectorate Parliament, which met in September 1654. Being, like most politicians, of a vague, sentimental nature (thus avoiding serious and dangerous topics) they started by wanting to 'revise the constitution,' and tried other well-known political dodges. Cromwell, who naturally hated to reform a constitution which had placed him at the top, made long speeches to the members. In his opening speech on September 4th, he said: 'the providences and dispensation of God have been so stupendous,' which was an excusable belief on the part of the man who had, by those providences, become Lord Protector. He said they had been rescued from anarchy: 'every man's hand was against his brother. . . . Indeed, we were almost grown arbitrary in everything.' His first anxiety was from the Levellers: for his democratic principles had their limits which stopped short of equality of person and property. 'The magistracy of the nation, was it not almost trampelled underfoot by men of Levelling principles? . . . The

men of that principle, after they had served their own turns, would have cried up interest and property then fast enough.' A true if cynical remark, which the more thoughtful members of his audience may have considered peculiarly expressive of his own position as a reformer who had cried down all monarchical principles, only to use them with doubled force when he himself got power.

He then went on to spiritual matters, and explained how 'liberty of conscience and liberty of subjects – two as glorious things to be contended for as our God hath given us; yet both these also abused for the patronising of villainies' – which was the sort of remark Laud must have made dozens of times in the Star Chamber. He insisted on the worldly fact that 'One thing more the Government hath done; it hath been instrumental to call a free Parliament, which, blessed be God, we see here this day! I say, a free Parliament.' He was wise to repeat the phrase, for probably not a fraction of Englishmen would have recognised the fact unless they had been told it was so. He then mentioned that the forfeited royalist lands and goods were already exhausted when the government took office, but that they had nevertheless abated the assessment by £30,000 a month for the next three months, and he temptingly added: 'yet these are but entrances and doors of hope, wherein, through the blessing of God, you may enter into rest and peace. But you are not yet entered' – a clear hint that they had better behave themselves until the Protector had finished his work of salvation. 'It is one of the great ends of calling this Parliament, that this Ship of the Commonwealth may be brought into a

safe harbour.' Cromwell had, by this time, learned the tricks of the political trade, and therefore promised Utopia to all who would follow him.

Within a few days this parliament had shown that it had not that automatic spirit of obedience which Cromwell had become accustomed to expect from his officers and men in the army. So he locked them all out of the House, but sent for them and made another speech on September 12th, in which he corrected an apparent misunderstanding: 'I said you were a free Parliament, and so you are, whilst you own the government and authority which called you hither.' It was very much that point of interpretation of the constitution which had caused the whole civil war, if Cromwell had possessed enough sense of humour to notice it. But this man spent so much time in the divine presence that he may have come to regard laughter as sacrilege.

He then repeated the old stock phrase: 'I called not myself to this place. I say again, I called not myself to this place'; and continued with an amazing threat: 'If my calling be from God, and my testimony from the people – God and the people shall take it from me, else I will not part with it. I should be false to the trust that God hath placed in me, and to the interests of the people of these nations if I should.' Now all this was so exceedingly like Charles Stuart's 'divine right' that the casual observer must have rocked with laughter at the strange coincidence. He then tried once again to defend his action in having driven out the Rump Parliament. It was one long wail that all this was God's command, and against his own reluctant will. Still striving to get rid of his power, he said, he had then called Barebones'

Parliament 'a chief end to myself was that I might have opportunity to lay down the power which was in my hands.'

The student must not jump to the conclusion that this was hypocrisy on Cromwell's part. It must be remembered that he had the mind of a fanatic, who can make himself believe what is not true – which is a great help in practical life.

Gathering confidence as he proceeded with continual assertion of his purity of motives, he made this astounding statement: 'Though I told you in my last speech that you were a free Parliament, yet I thought it was understood that I was Protector and the Authority that called you, and that I was in possession of the Government by a good right from God and men.' He then went on to lay down the law as to what were the fundamentals in the constitution. 'The Government by a Single Person and a Parliament is a fundamental. . . . That Parliament should not make themselves perpetual is a fundamental. . . . Is not liberty of conscience in religion a fundamental. . . . All the money of this nation would not have tempted men to fight upon such an account as they have engaged in, if they had not had hopes of liberty better than they had from Episcopacy, or than would have been afforded them from a Scottish Presbytery – or an English either.' And then follows a crafty argument to prove that the power over the militia must not be vested wholly in parliament! This had been the immediate cause of the civil war, and the final straw was when parliament demanded that the control of the militia should be in its hands instead of the king's. But Cromwell had now become king

himself for all practical purposes – so naturally he began to think like a king. His introduction of this subject into his speech is very suggestive: 'Another [fundamental] which I had forgotten is the militia.' Nobody for a moment will believe that this forgetfulness was anything but a piece of clumsy acting. For Cromwell knew perfectly well that it was the key to his position, and his whole argument proved it: 'What signifies a provision against perpetuating of parliaments if this [power over militia] be solely in them?' For, he continued, parliament could do what it liked with the constitution if it had full power over the army.

He then announced that since they showed their intention of disobeying these fundamentals – in other words, his wishes – 'I have caused a stop to be put to your entrance into the Parliament House. I am sorry and I could be sorry to the death that there is cause for this.' He said he would admit into the House those who signed a promise to accept the constitution which he and the army had imposed on them.

All except the extreme republicans signed and were re-admitted to their seats. But in a short time they were debating about the constitution again. It was quite impossible for self-respecting republican people to swallow all the royalist propaganda and excuses, just because they came from the mouth of Oliver Cromwell, who called himself only Protector, although he was demanding prerogatives for the claiming of which he had beheaded Charles Stuart. Even the army grew restless. In January 1655 we find Cromwell writing to Devonshire ordering that inquiries should be made concerning the movements of Adjutant-General Allen,

who 'doth ill offices by multiplying dissatisfaction in the minds of men with the present Government.' One matter which was worrying the soldiers was the old trouble that had always been their greatest interest in constitutional affairs, namely their pay. Since England was now ruled by mercenary soldiers, the military estimates were the central point of the constitution. Parliament again began talking of reducing the army to about half its size, and voted to lower the assessments by which its pay was raised. Then it again determined, in dead opposition to Cromwell's ruling, to assert its right to control the militia. In other words, the parliament intended to rule England, instead of allowing Cromwell to rule it. It was Charles I.'s position all over again!

Whereupon Cromwell did exactly what Charles would have done in the circumstances – he dissolved the unruly parliament – first making a longer speech than ever to prove that he was only acting as the agent of the Lord, for the government 'was owned by God, as being the dispensation of His providence after twelve years' war, and sealed and witnessed unto by the people' – the last phrase being as complete a lie as it was presumably possible for a devout Puritan to utter. He then had the cool insolence to excuse himself for raising taxes without consent of parliament.

Cromwell, however, was working himself up to one of the brain storms of which there have been symptoms at all the crises of his life – at the execution of Charles, at Drogheda, when he drove out the Rump, and at other moments of violence. So it may scarcely be fair to quote the following passage as the words of a com-

pletely sane man: 'We know the Lord hath poured this nation from vessel to vessel, till He poured it into your lap, when you first came together. . . . And this I speak with more earnestness, because I speak for God and not for men.' He had clearly arrived at that pitch of spiritual intensity – 'I speak for God' – that the medical books usually describe as a symptom of insanity.

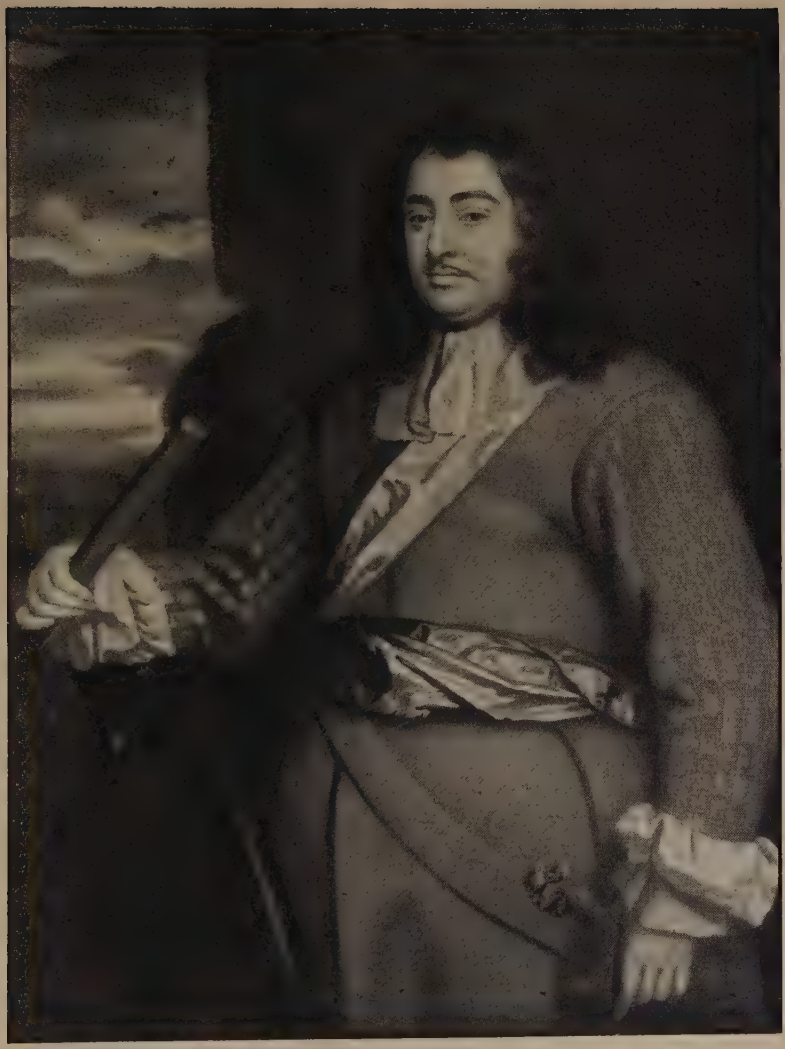
He told the members of parliament, in one of his more restrained, more worldly, passages, that he had discovered that the Levellers were plotting with the royalists for a united rising to overthrow the government; and he showed plenty of sanity when he went back, at the end of his speech, to what was really the centre of his problem: the urgent necessity of getting money to pay the soldiers, and so keep them contented and quiet. 'Instead of seasonably providing for the Army, you have laboured to overthrow the Government, and the Army is now upon free-quarters . . . near thirty weeks behind in pay.' In short, a parliament which would not provide money for the mercenaries – Cromwell's sole basis of power – was no use to the Protector, so he concluded: 'I think it my duty to tell you that it is not for the profit of these nations, nor fit for the common and public good, for you to continue here any longer. And therefore I do declare unto you, that I do dissolve this parliament.'

CHAPTER XIV

MAJOR-GENERALS: AND THE END

THUS, on January 22nd, 1655, one more parliament of England was dismissed because it did not agree with the soldiers as to the manner in which the State should be ruled – or, more strictly, the manner in which the army should be paid. Cromwell then did one of the frankest acts of his life – he ruled England by major-generals. It seemed a pitiable conclusion to a civil war, fought for liberty, that it should replace Charles by courts-martial. But it was a matter of life and death for Cromwell. He had now done almost everything of a political kind that he had executed Charles for trying to do, and it was not possible for a self-respecting nation to listen any longer to his loud protestations that this was the way the Lord had chosen to rescue them from tyrants.

The national disgust and indignation became greater and more obvious. Under date of February 13th there is this contemporary record of the state of affairs: 'The last design of the Cavaliers was come to a ripeness, for yesterday they intended to have taken away the life of his Highness [such was the usual mode of address now customary for England's new king, Cromwell], to-day to rise in all the western parts, to-morrow in all the northern parts of the nation. Hereupon his Highness dispersed all officers in town to their commands



DUKE OF ALBEMARLE. Studio of Sir Peter Lely

National Portrait Gallery, London

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abroad . . . tripled the guards and scoured the city and four miles round with horse.' It was difficult to know how far Cromwell could trust his army. We have seen that General Harrison, the believer in the reign of the saints, had been dismissed already. If we can believe the Hutchinson *Memoirs*, Cromwell had taken every precaution that craft and tyranny could devise: 'He weeded in a few months' time, above a hundred and fifty godly officers out of the army, with whom many of the religious soldiers went off, and in their room abundance of the king's dissolute soldiers were entertained.'

In March a small royalist rebellion broke out in Salisbury. The sane Englishman was sick to death of fighting, so only a few score men would rise, and they were easily crushed. The prisoners were dealt with by the law-courts; one or two were beheaded, and the greater number sent to the Barbadoes – which was equivalent to slavery, and usually death also. But it had needed much care in packing the juries, before these punishments could be imposed, as a pathetic little letter from the county sheriff to Cromwell's government in London shows: 'I resolve that not one man shall be returned in the one or other juries but such as may be confided in, and of the honest, well affected party to his Highness and the present government, if there be but enough to be found of them throughout the whole county, which I hope there is.'

It is not surprising that the judges of the high courts began to get uneasy, not knowing whether they were administrating law or the orders of a despot. The case of Cony was enough to arouse most anxious doubt

whether Cromwell had left any law surviving. Cony was a London merchant who refused to pay a duty on silk, which he said had been imposed by an illegal order, without parliamentary sanction. It was practically Bates's case over again – and Cromwell now acted in a manner that was far more tyrannical than Charles Stuart had been. He first sent for Cony and tried to persuade him to give way, but Cony promptly told him that he was now doing exactly what he had called 'the tyranny of princes' when Charles had done it. When Cony would not give way Cromwell sent him to prison, and when he applied for a writ of habeas corpus, and the judges showed signs of granting it, Cromwell sent Maynard, Cony's counsel to the Tower; and, calling the judges before him, abused them with the utmost indecency of language, and made Chief-Justice Rolle resign. It was, on the whole, perhaps the most flagrant contempt of law since Richard III. had murdered the princes in the Tower. Yet, after Clarendon has told this story, he goes on: 'In all other matters which did not concern the life of his jurisdiction, he seemed to have great reverence for the law, rarely interposing between party and party.'

Cromwell, by his defiance of the wishes of everybody outside his own small sect of 'godly men,' had so exasperated the general public opinion that he was now driven with his back to the wall. If the people would not pay the taxes necessary to maintain his government – and his army above all – then he must take the money as Charles had taken it when he was in the same position. They both had the same excuse – the State must continue. The difficulty arose

because they were both, Charles and Oliver, such essentially narrow-minded men that they would not come to reasonable terms.

So Cromwell fell back on major-generals. Brute force is the remedy which is the first resource of so many stupid people. It saves the use of the brain. Any fool can order a gun to be fired. The royalist rising at Salisbury was Cromwell's excuse for this action. England was divided into ten districts, and, in October 1655, a major-general was sent to each of these, and ordered to force Cromwell's government on the inhabitants, and, if necessary, call out the local militia to make the people submit. As the Hutchinson *Memoirs* state it, with bitter words: 'he set up a company of silly, mean fellows, called major-generals, as governors in every county. These ruled according to their wills, by no law but what seemed good in their own eyes, imprisoning men, obstructing the cause of justice between men and men.' The republican writer who was on the spot, thought even more harshly of Cromwell's rule than the royalist Clarendon, who was in exile. The probability is that if there was serious corruption under this martial rule it was against Cromwell's wishes; but the system itself was bound to fail, for it was against the whole instincts of the race to be driven by soldiers, and, when the driving was towards a sour Puritan morality and a centralised paternal government from Whitehall, then the situation became intolerable.

Even the most accomplished of tyrants cannot throw over the principles of a lifetime without a protest from his friends. In August, 1656, Ludlow was called before the Council to explain his discontent with the existing

government. What more did he want, asked Cromwell, and Ludlow curtly answered: 'That which we fought for, that the nation might be governed by its own consent.' And Cromwell gave as his answer the pathetic retort of a man at his wits' end to solve the problem of all governors: 'But where shall we find that consent? Amongst the Prelatical, Presbyterian, Independent, Anabaptist or Levelling parties?' The tragedy of Cromwell's life was now facing him in all its stern reality. He had put down so many governments – and did not know of a better to put in their place.

But he went blindly on, with his dull fanatical belief in his destiny, which no failure seemed able to dispel. It was about this time that he wrote to the Barbadoes with reference to the disasters of his military expedition under Penn and Venables: 'which, though it hath miscarried in what we hoped for, through the disposing hand of God, for reason best known to Himself, and, as we justly conceive, for our sins, yet is not the Cause the less His . . . and therefore we dare not relinquish it, but shall, the Lord assisting, prosecute it with what strength we can. . . .'

For the moment, while England was handed over to major-generals, Cromwell's mind was full of foreign affairs. Believing, as he did, in military force, he had the true imperialist mind. It was, perhaps, the only permanent effect he had in English history that he put an official stamp on the policy of empire-building, and all the aggressive acts that follow it. Queen Elizabeth had always been a little timid about recognising the wild deeds of Drake and Raleigh and the first English freebooters. But Cromwell had no such lady-like

scruples; his policy was to take by force anything he wanted. He had not the traditional instinct of the true-bred monarch and gentleman, that it is necessary to consider the feelings of others as well as his own.

But his foreign policy was largely forced on him, like most other things he did. He was mainly a creature of circumstances and driven by the wind. At the moment he wanted money to pay for his very expensive government and his ruinous army. The tyranny of Cromwell could not be conducted nearly as cheaply as the rule of the more orderly Charles, and the national expenditure had increased enormously. Now, the most obvious way to collect money was to have a war with Spain and raid her colonies and shipping. Mr. Beer, who has studied Cromwell's economic policy more closely than most historians, puts down the Spanish war to this cause – a desire to fill the Treasury with loot. Hence the expedition under Penn and Venables, which captured Jamaica in 1655. It may be regarded as the beginning of the official British Empire, for the North American colonies had been the work of traders and colonists, whereas Cromwell's expedition was the act of the English government. Cromwell had sent a naval expedition to the Mediterranean in 1654 under Blake, to crush the pirates who intercepted merchant vessels. This pleased the merchants, who had been the basis of the civil war against Charles. Of more immediate use to Cromwell was the capture by Blake and Montague (of the Hinchinbrook family) of the Spanish treasure-fleet, and when, in October 1656, it needed thirty-eight carts to carry the captured silver to the Tower of London, then men began to feel that this

idealist and dreamer, Cromwell, was a fellow to reckon with, and perhaps as useful to England as other kings had been. At least he could bring home the spoils – and the men who had made the Puritan Revolution had a fairly keen eye for the material results. With the beginning of Cromwell's foreign policy of imperialism and spoil capturing, the idealism of the Puritans had worn very thin, and the materialism was showing plainly through the thin cloak of theological trappings.

Cromwell's relations with France and Spain were also a delicate subject for the rigid seekers of the saints. Both countries were papist in religion. It must have needed much squeezing of his conscience before Cromwell could have even contemplated an alliance with them, and yet, at different times, he showed himself ready to sign a favourable agreement with either. He finally signed a treaty of alliance with France in October 1655, and carried on a war against Spain until he died.

Although Cromwell had fought the civil war to compel Charles to rule by a parliament, he by no means liked being hampered by any such institution himself. So many political theories break down when the reformers get into power. But Oliver the Protector was compelled to call another parliament for exactly the same reason that Charles the King had to do the same: both could get no more money without the assistance of a national assembly. Cromwell had been collecting taxes by despotic orders that were still more illegal than Charles's doubtful methods. But he was now £800,000 short of the money he needed to fight both wars abroad, and

also maintain an army to hold Englishmen down at home.

So Cromwell summoned a second parliament to meet in September 1656. He began the proceedings by one of his amazing speeches that hover half-way between the sublime and the ridiculous. He was now a great man, and, for all intents and purposes, might have called himself king. His own children were already entitling their mother as 'Her Highness,' when they wrote to each other. He began his speech to the House by a clever speaker's trick, saying he disdained the 'Art of Rhetoricians' and their 'words. . . . Truly our business is to speak Things.' He then plunged into a maze of rhetoric and words!

His first point was of the patriotic kind, an appeal to them to save the nation from its enemies of all sorts: 'all the wicked men of the world, whether at home or abroad, that are the Enemies to the very Being of these Nations' – which meant all those who did not agree with Cromwell and his army. Strangely enough, the London merchants had not been grateful to Cromwell for starting a war against the Spaniards, for it interfered with their trade. So Cromwell had to explain, if he could, why they, as true Protestants, should hate that race. 'Truly, your great enemy is the Spaniard. He is a natural enemy. He is naturally so, by reason of that enmity that is in him against whatsoever is of God' – as he was worshipped in Huntingdon. Cromwell then went on to expound how the King of Spain was behind the royalist party that desired to restore the Stuarts – but on this point the speaker became so incoherent with passion that it is difficult to follow his argument, but

it seems to have been all that Elizabeth used when she was fighting Spain a half century before.

He then turned to the royalist rebels in England with strange taunts from the mouth of a man who had professed a dislike to peers and such sort of men: 'these [the Salisbury revolters] were a company of mean fellows – not a lord nor a gentleman, nor a man of fortune, amongst them.' Yet, indiscreetly enough, he admitted that it was planned as the beginning of a national rising, nay, more, it was part of a papist plot to crush England. Then he cleverly aroused their alarm still more by announcing that the Levellers and the 'Commonwealth's men' – as he contemptuously called them – were all in the plot, but he dismissed them as 'a generation of men that cry up nothing but righteousness and justice and liberty.' The audacity of Cromwell here rose to the level of the ridiculous, for he could not have been so simple as to imagine that his hearers would forget that these social virtues had been the war cry of the Puritan Rebellion.

All this alarmist description was put forward as an excuse for the major-generals – who certainly needed a great deal of explanation from the man who had beheaded Charles for mere trivialities beside what he himself was now doing. He went on with stories of royalist plots, and agreements even between Fifth Monarchy men and Levellers – which were probably true, for all England was about ready to join together to put an end to the farce of Cromwell's 'freedom.' The Protector's speech then became a confused mass of argument defending his finance, and his treatment of religion – which was to allow any creed or practice

that did not displease him. It should be noted that the sects he persecuted were the Catholics and Episcopalians, because they were usually royalists, and the Quakers, because he could not tolerate anyone who did not believe in his own chief weapon of war.

But it did not much matter what he said in this long rambling speech, for the deed which followed it made words mere trivialities. When the members of parliament went to their House to take their seats, they found a guard of soldiers at the door, and only those representatives of England were allowed to enter who were approved by Cromwell and his Council. One hundred were thus shut out, another fifty were too proud to be dictated to in this manner, and stayed away. The 'free' parliament then did what Cromwell told it to.

The farce had now almost reached its climax. Cromwell had strongly opposed the calling of this parliament, saying that he was prepared to raise money by his own command. When he had found that no one – soldiers or civilians – would tolerate this defiance of the law, then he had given way, and the parliament had been summoned – only to find a guard of soldiers to keep out anyone the Protector did not want there. Cromwell had known from the day he became Protector that he could only rule by force. So long as the army obeyed him he seemed safe, but it is one of the more rational and merciful dispensations of Providence that even an armed force cannot hold down a whole nation for ever. Tyranny has a way of making itself ridiculous. There are signs that Cromwell's none too solid brain was weathering badly. There is a small indication of the direction of the wind in a letter he wrote in December

1656, to the Mayor of Newcastle, advising him and his aldermen not to be too intolerant towards other Christians. His words are peculiar: 'Having said this, I, or rather the Lord, require of you,' and so on.

It is not surprising when Cromwell wrote official letters in such close collaboration with the Almighty, that a certain James Naylor should take the next step and announce that he was better than the agent of the Lord, being the Son of God himself. Parliament, having had too much trouble already with ambassadors from heaven, promptly ordered Naylor to be whipped, pilloried, and his tongue bored. This misguided person had made the serious blunder of not collecting an army before he announced that he was acting for God. Cromwell who had a sympathetic interest in the affair – having tried that bluff himself – did his best to get Naylor's punishment made as easy as possible.

In return for a parliamentary grant, Cromwell had abolished the rule of major-generals at the end of 1656 – just as Charles I. had bargained with his parliaments. But the situation was still critical. Cromwell must make more concessions, and, in December 1656 we find him writing to Cardinal Mazarin, professing his desire to be nice even to Roman Catholics as soon as he dared – the meeting-house at Huntingdon would have shuddered had it heard – and ending by signing himself: 'your brother and confederate.' It is clear that, given time, Oliver would have settled down into a very sober man of affairs.

But his troubles grew thicker and thicker. He then appears to have intended to conciliate the royalists, for it was his own son-in-law, Claypole, who opposed the

Bill which continued the heavy taxation on them, whereas the military leaders – being anxious as usual about their pay – desired this source of revenue to continue. They were probably not very sure of Cromwell by this time, for he had already begun to reduce the army, which was becoming as dangerous to his supremacy as parliament itself.

Another plot to assassinate Cromwell, in which Sindercombe was the chief active figure, proved an excuse for again discussing the constitution, and when parliament came to congratulate the Protector on his escape, it was moved in the *Humble Petition and Advice* that he should be made a full fledged king, and England was to go back to the old system of King, Lords, and Commons. But there was one significant innovation proposed which no earlier English constitutional law had ever seen, namely, a permanent yearly revenue of £1,000,000 to maintain the army and navy. This was a bait to the army; but it was not swallowed by the chief military leaders, who were wise enough to see that the restoration of the old constitution would mean the end of their unconstitutional power.

It was indeed full time to call Cromwell king, for he was gradually adopting the royal attributes without leave. Thus, writing in January 1657 to the Speaker of the Parliament, he began: 'Right Trusty and Well-beloved, We greet you well . . .' and ending: 'do desire that the House will let Us know the grounds,' and so on. All which pronouns were of the regal number. On February 27th a deputation of officers went to Cromwell to announce that they objected to his being king. The Protector gave them a large bit

of his mind, which was, to put it shortly, that all his blunders had come from listening to their advice: 'they had made him their drudge upon all occasions.' He said the present parliament, which proposed to make him king, was the army's own choice – for it had locked out all the members it disliked: 'If the members do good things, I must and will stand by them. They are honest men, and they have done good things. I know not what you can blame them for, unless because they love me too well.' He then went on to say that it was time they had a House of Lords – in short, he plainly showed he had a great liking for the proposed scheme for reviving the old constitution.

The officers collapsed, for there was something about Cromwell which made men afraid of him. Nevertheless, he could not yet kick away the ladder by which he had climbed, and, when the *Humble Petition*, on March 31st, asked him to accept the crown, he begged time for 'looking at the conduct and pleasure of God in it,' having first remarked, with his most theological sigh, that all 'the burdens that have lain heavy upon me, they have been laid upon me by the hand of God.' A few days later, April 3rd, he gave an answer which was a refusal to accept the title of king, but so worded that it seemed a request to continue the offer. He appeared to desire to have his position made more regular, yet dreaded the outcry if he took the name of king.

It is impossible to know what exactly the crafty mind of Cromwell was aiming at, and, when parliament again returned with their offer on April 8th, a letter, written by Morland the next day, is the best statement of what happened: 'his Highness made a speech so dark that

none knows whether he will accept it or no; but some think he will accept it.' All which shows that Cromwell had become almost as good a tactician in the political arena as on the field of battle. So still the negotiations continued. At the interview on April 13th he said some illuminating phrases among his rambling remarks – which often appear to be addressed to his own wavering mind rather than to his audience. He said he thought the law had never been so justly administered since the Rebellion began, as it had been since he was Protector; therefore, he argued, the title of king was not essential. Then he went on: 'I hope I do not desire to give a rule to anybody. . . . A man may lawfully desire a great Place to do good in. But I profess I had not that apprehension, when I undertook the Place, that I could do much good; but I did think I might prevent immanent evil. . . . I should altogether think any person fitter than I am for any such business. . . . For truly I have, as before God, thought often that I could not tell what my business was save comparing myself to a good Constable to keep the peace of the Parish. And truly this hath been my content and satisfaction in the Troubles that I have undergone. That yet you have peace.'

This was one of the most typical speeches of this man, and it was most typical in that it did not come to any definite conclusion. Still more characteristic at once of his simplicity and his craftiness, was his candid avowal that in making his decision concerning the title of king he had to consider the opinions and convictions of the sort of men he had collected and trained as the backbone of his invincible army: 'I raised such men as

had the Fear of God before them, and made some conscience of what they did. . . . I cannot think that God would bless me in the undertaking of anything that would justly and with cause grieve them.'

Still the indecision continued, and, by April 20th, there were signs that Cromwell's mind, or body, was not standing the strain at all well, and a hearer of that day's speech wrote in his diary: 'Nothing but a dark speech, more promiscuous than before.' The next day he made a very long speech, and said he wanted to discuss the other constitutional proposals apart from the title of king. He discussed the matter of the Long Parliament and why it had continued to sit, which 'did not satisfy a company of poor men, who had ventured their lives, and has, some thought that they had a little interest to inquire after these things' – by which he meant himself and his army. He then continued: 'Truly I will now come and tell you a story of my own weakness and folly' – by which he meant the calling of the Little Parliament, the fiasco of Barebones and his friends; a rather pathetic though courageous confession of his want of judgment.

But it all came to very little in practice, and it was described by a listener as: 'Another long speech, almost as dark as before.' Nevertheless, there was a feeling that Cromwell really meant to give way and accept the Crown, after all these rambling protestings. But the army leaders, Lambert, Fleetwood, and Desborough, said they would resign if he took the regal title. A deputation of officers presented to parliament a petition that the Protector should not be again asked to become king. Cromwell tried to suppress the petition, but it

was too late. So, on May 8th, 1657, he – one feels, with reluctance – gave his answer at last: 'I cannot undertake the Government with that title of King.' The speech was very short, showing that he was annoyed to answer as he did.

So the *Humble Petition and Advice* Constitution had to be amended by striking out the title 'King', and Cromwell, on June 26th, 1657, was again installed as Protector, with much pomp of purple and ermine, and sword and sceptre – and Charles Stuart, if he could have been present, would have envied a successful rebellion that had imposed a tyranny of which even a Stuart had never dreamed. It was a kingship in all but name, for the Protector had now the right to nominate his successor, he had a fixed revenue of an amount that would have made Charles the happiest man on earth, and Cromwell could nominate a second Chamber, to take the place of the old House of Lords. Well might Henry Cromwell seem content that he was on the way to the throne when he wrote to Thurloe: 'I confess I like gradual proceedings best. . . . I am contented that the finishing of our settlement be also deferred till a competent trial hath been made of the present way . . . although we should at last return to that very form which was of old. . . .'

The significance of the new Protectorate was that it was granted by a more or less representative parliament, the first Protectorate having been only the frank gift of the army. The more stable Cromwell's position appeared to be, the more the Fifth Monarchy men gnashed their teeth with rage that the coming of Christ's kingdom was being delayed by this intrusion

of another earthly monarch. Cromwell, in their eyes, was a traitor and a hypocrite to the good cause they once imagined he had served. The royalists hesitated for a time, but Sexby (once a soldier of Cromwell's own regiment) took the money of Spain to assist in murdering the Protector, and Sir Charles Firth declares that he worked with 'a passionate hatred of Cromwell and a democratic enthusiasm which he sincerely felt.' 'Killing no murder' was his work, brightened by the wit of Captain Titus, and its stinging satire would have made Cromwell wince if he had possessed any sense of laughter.

Truly, Cromwell at this top-step of his ladder is yet a somewhat pitiable figure on the historical page. He was certainly respected throughout the continent of Europe – or it might be truer to say that he was greatly feared because of his army and his navy. In 1657 Blake had left only the floating spars of the Spanish fleet in the bay at Santa Cruz. The great Louis Bourbon of France, and the still greater Cardinal Mazarin, had treated Cromwell as an equal and made a treaty which promised Dunkirk to England – and they would have given not a brick of it to anyone except one they feared. Charles X. of Sweden was begging the Protector for a loan. By some extraordinary freak of fortune, the late squire of Huntingdon and the farmer of the Ely tithes found himself the most courted man in European politics. Little wonder that his emotional mind began to dream of leading a Crusade against Rome and its servants, the House of Hapsburg – as Henry V. had once dreamed of riding forth against the Turks.

Yet the visionary had forgotten the most important matter in the world – the facts. He had forgotten, or perhaps rather, tried to forget, that England was still unconquered. He was still sitting on a throne upheld by a mercenary army that alone kept him from falling into the raging sea of an angry people. Parliament met again on January 20th, 1658. He may have imagined that things were going well. He seemed accepted by the older established social set, for in November he had married his daughter, Frances, to the grandson of the Earl of Warwick, and Mary to Lord Fauconberg, and the marriages had been attended by 'many other persons of high honour and quality.'

But there were many flies in the ointment, for this Fauconberg and one other were the only members of the ancient peerage who would condescend to sit in Cromwell's new House of Lords, and it was filled with a very tattered collection of nobodies. Even to get these he had to drain the Commons of some of his few enthusiastic supporters. So when parliament re-assembled in January 1658 the Protector was weaker in voting strength, and the members whom his soldiers had shut out of the earlier parliament came back, under the terms of the new constitution.

Cromwell's opening speech revealed either the blindness of the dull mind or the audacity of the adventurer. He could now begin: 'My lords and gentlemen,' like any monarch of old. His words had an apparent confidence worthy of an ancient line of kings: 'We hope we may say we have arrived at what we aimed at, if not at that which is much beyond our expectation. . . . It was the maintaining of the Liberties of these Nations,

our Civil Liberties as Men, our Spiritual Liberties as Christians.' He reminded them that all Protestants had now liberty, whereas before the civil war they had been threatened by a tyranny that had begun: 'to eat out the core and power and heart of all Religion, by bringing on us a company of poisonous Popish Ceremonies.' He then referred to the Eighty-fifth Psalm, and modestly ascribed all their present peace and freedom to the grace of God.

But there was another side to this earthly Utopia: 'Yet we are not without the murmuring of many people, who turn all this grace and goodness into wormwood; who indeed are disappointed by the works of God. . . . They considered not the operation of His Laws. They considered not that God resisted and broke in pieces the Powers that were, that men might fear Him.' The speech was full of the tragedy of a man who cannot see far beyond the length of his own nose. For within four days the members who had been thus so clearly told that the arm of God had settled their national troubles, showed obvious signs of rearranging the constitution of England according to earthly notions of their own. On January 25th he called the Houses to listen to another speech, in which he tried – in vain – to scare them into silence by displaying all the horrors of foreign invasion and renewed civil war. But the most significant note was the threat of a discontented, unpaid army: 'five or six months behind in pay'; for without an army the Cavaliers might be upon them at any moment. Then he fell back on the Eighty-fifth Psalm again.

The members heeded him not, and went on with a

fierce determination to make parliament supreme in defiance of the Protector and the will of God. An understanding was arrived at between the republicans and the army leaders who were getting anxious about their pay – the most vital matter, as we have seen, in the history of the Commonwealth. The Fifth Monarchy men were called in to help swell the revolt, and, together, they all drew up a petition asking for a supreme parliament, liberty of conscience to sects that were beyond Cromwell's limit of toleration, and – the most vital request – that, 'officers and soldiers who have hazarded their lives for the nation's liberty may not be turned out of their respective employments without a legal trial at a court martial.'

A new move, in short, had begun in political affairs: the parliamentary party had decided to win over the army from Cromwell's side. Henceforth the soldiers should be taught that parliament would protect their interests better even than Cromwell. But the old cavalry leader was in his element when faced by a mutiny, and he hit quickly and hard. He arrested three Fifth Monarchy men who were, with success, contaminating the minds of the Protector's own regiment. Then the next day, February 4th, he lost his temper – another brain storm – and rushed to Whitehall in a hired hackney carriage, being unable to wait for such a luxury as a state-coach. When it was realised that he intended to dissolve a parliament that had scarcely sat a fortnight, even his friends begged him to think before he acted so rashly. But he was full of uncontrolled passion – his only manner of great strokes – and cursed Fleetwood: 'You are a milksop; as the Lord liveth I will

dissolve this House.' Dissolve it he did – and his parting shot was: 'Let God be judge between you and me'; to which insolence the indignant Commons replied with a fervent 'Amen.'

It was the final collapse of the Cromwellian system. He had now, by this act, demonstrated that he knew no method of governing England except by the methods of a drill-sergeant. Every parliament that would not obey his will had been turned out as a soldier is ordered to the guard-room.

The members of the representative assembly had turned at last upon Cromwell with defiance. They were now to adopt his own trick of governing by petting the army, and by that fervent 'Amen' they appealed to the will of God as confidently as he had done himself. He had taught his opponents that they might rule if they bribed the army with pay and sheltered their tyranny behind a camouflage of God's will. They were both soon to be proved in the wrong, for the nation was to rise alike against soldiers and political adventurers in disgust.

But for the moment the army still stood behind Cromwell. He had purged it of almost all its turbulent political and ambitious spirits; Harrison, Lambert, and the rest of that sort had already been driven out and replaced by mere professional soldiers, who had scarcely a political principle left but the receipt of regular pay. In short, Cromwell had saved himself, for the moment, by making his Ironside men of God into mercenaries. But being now only mercenary, they were at the command of the best paymaster, and the parliamentary opposition might commence bidding for

their services. However, so far, Cromwell could bully them with success. When the officers of his own regiment protested against this last dismissal of parliament he cashiered the lot of them.

There were signs that the Protector was feeling the strain of his ceaseless fight against so many foes – for all England hated him. There is the note of more than crafty rhetoric in his speech to the parliament that he had just dismissed: 'The Petition and Advice given me by you did draw me to accept the place of Protector. . . . I can say in the presence of God, in comparison to whom we are but like poor creeping ants upon the earth – I would have been glad to have lived under my woodside, to have kept a flock of sheep – rather than undertook such a Government as this is.' It was the speech of a weary, disillusioned man.

But he could not relax his hold, for his enemies were on all sides every day seeking to overthrow him. There was a royalist plot in April and another in May, but easily frustrated by Cromwell's most excellent system of spies – the dangerous tools of tyrants. The royalists were so clumsy, and the nation in general so tired of strife that it is possible this government might have continued until a servile nation got used to it, as it accepts bad weather. In June 1658 Cromwell's soldiers did most brave and efficient service at the Battle of the Dunes, assisting the French to crush the Spaniards. As a reward Dunkirk was given to England, and Cromwell remained for the moment the centre of European diplomacy. This success against Spain reacted favourably on the Protector's financial position, for it meant a probable reduction in military expenses.

Nevertheless, Cromwell's revenue was far below his necessities. He had at the end of his life a national income of almost £2,000,000 – more than twice the royal revenue when the civil war began. But being a tyrant and an imperialist it was necessary to spend almost the whole amount on maintaining an army and navy that had been unnecessary in the reign of Charles. There was, therefore, an annual deficit of at least £400,000. So Cromwell would sooner or later have been compelled to call another parliament. This would in all probability have again offered him the crown, which, having cleansed the army of republicans, Cromwell might have this time ventured to accept. But it is useless to surmise. That hand of Providence, which he had so often claimed as his guide, was now to turn against him in a very clear and stern manner.

His favourite daughter, Elizabeth Claypole, now the wife of one of Cromwell's new 'peers,' in August 1658 became dangerously ill, and her father sat by her bedside for almost a month on end. On August 6th she died, and, when George Fox saw the Protector, on August 20th, riding in Hyde Park at the head of his Life Guards: 'I saw and felt a waft of death go forth against him and when I came to him he looked like a dead man.' Cromwell was clearly very ill, some kind of ague, it is said. But he had a mystical confidence in his recovery, still sure that the Lord had need of his assistance on earth. Fleetwood, his son-in-law, wrote to Henry Cromwell in Ireland: 'His Highness hath made great discoveries of the Lord to him in his sickness, and hath some assurances of his being restored and made further serviceable in this work'; and Cromwell

himself told his wife: 'I shall not die of this disorder. I am sure of it. Don't think that I am mad. . . . God Almighty himself hath given that answer.'

But even that unshakeable conviction that his own will must be likewise the wish of God, was shaken at last. He felt himself in danger, not only physically, but spiritually also; and he consulted with his godly advisers whether if a man had once been 'saved' he were safe for eternity, even though he had again fallen into sin. The ministers of the gospel said that the true salvation was never lost. And Cromwell murmured his contentment: 'I am safe, for I know I was once in grace' – though after so many years of political intrigue and military strife, he would seem to have less certainty of his soul's present condition. It would not be very profitable to repeat the many sentences of prayer and ramblings that have been recorded of Oliver Cromwell's death-bed. Some of them have the signs of being composed by interested parties, theological and political, and the wise critic will have decided that the deeds of a whole life are more weighty than the hurried words at parting.

It is said that Cromwell at the last nominated his son, Richard, as his successor in the Protectorate, but even if he did so, it is probable that his disease made him incapable of coherent thought for one or two days before the end. It came, strangely in keeping with his belief in signs and portents, on September 3rd, the anniversary day of both the Battles of Dunbar and Worcester. It would almost seem proof that Providence had turned against him at last.

With what follows we are not here concerned. Suffice

it to say that in less than two years England was shouting itself hoarse with apparently sincere joy at the restoration of Charles II. All Cromwell's mighty efforts had come to that: he had convinced England that another Stuart, with all his tyranny, would be better than another Cromwell, with all his liberty. It is a favourite pastime for philosophers and people of vivid emotions to draw learned principles and vast generalisations from such a life as that of Oliver Cromwell. It is a safer conclusion to leave the facts to speak for themselves, and the reader who can find the principles of democracy and freedom in the military rule of this Puritan soldier will be justified in the proud knowledge that his imagination has triumphed over the evidence.

It is instructive to end with almost the last documentary fact which Oliver Cromwell has left us. It is a letter dated July 16th, 1658, written to: 'Our Son, the Lord Henry Cromwell our Deputy of Ireland,' which runs thus: 'I have received a Petition from Liet.-Col. Nelson touching his transporting Irish into Spain, desiring thereby that he may have some satisfaction for his losses sustained in that business, out of lands in Ireland. I do believe he hath been a very great sufferer and that his sufferings have been of some advantage to Ireland, by carrying away these people thence. And I know and so do you . . . how well he has deserved for the service of the Commonwealth . . . and am exceeding willing and indeed desirous that something might be done for him which might be a mark of favour to him.' There we have the chief fact of Cromwell's rule: that it was maintained by 'marks of favour'

to soldiers who would obey the orders of the Cromwells – even if it was the despicable work of carrying Irish peasants into exile and slavery, in order to make room for the mercenaries of the Puritan army. Oliver Cromwell had set out with the high profession that he would save the parliamentary liberties of Englishmen. That was his theory. In practice he never once allowed England to elect a free parliament, and his only permanent legacy to the national constitution was a standing army. A fact like that cannot be fitly explained by the mere historian. It is a subject for a writer of great tragedy – or farcical comedy.

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